



Beef Efficiency Scheme (BES)

Frequently asked questions

General

1. I have a large herd and do not have enough pages in my BES diary/I need a new BES diary - What should I do?

If you contact ScotEID help-desk on 01466 794323, an additional diary will be sent to you at no cost.

2. I am registered on ScotEID with two County Parish Holdings (CPH). Will all my cattle data be shown on one account when I go to capture BES data?

Although you may have more than one ScotEID account, a BES application must include your whole IACS business, so you will be required to include all your cattle herds in one application.

3. If I don't continue BES after claiming in the first year will I have to repay any monies I received?

If you have received a payment for the first year then, yes, you will have to pay the money back (unless your reason for withdrawing from the scheme falls under force majeure/exceptional circumstances). If no money has been received, there will be no recovery of monies.

4. What are the benefits of joining the Scheme?

Data about your animals will help you make better breeding and management choices. This could lead, for example, to higher rates of calving or growth. This should help both the environment and your profits.

The Scheme will also contribute towards a more sustainable Scottish beef sector, both environmentally and economically.

5. I don't have weighing equipment on my farm - what should I do?

We recognise that many units will not have weighing equipment. If you are not in a position to purchase weigh-bars or a weigh-crate, it is recommended that you borrow or hire a weigh-crate, particularly if you don't sell your calves at weaning. However, to ease the process you will be able to weigh groups of evenly-sized calves as a batch at market from which individual average weights can be obtained.

6. When do I have to weigh my calves?

You must weigh all calves between 120 and 400 days and record their weight on the BES database. If you have not recorded a weight when the calf reaches 400 days old you will have 15 working days to record the weight on the data base or you may breach the scheme requirements.

7. What happens if my calf numbers increase during the scheme?

There are no BES penalties for increasing numbers. You are, however, required to record the compulsory data for all eligible calves and tissue sample 20 per cent of your defined reference animal numbers (based on your applicable reference year) in each scheme year.

8. What is the payment rate and when will it be paid?

The payment rate is £32.00 per animal which using a formula will be converted to a payment equalling £48.00 per hectare. Claims are made on your SAF and are based on the area claimed for BPS and payments will be made in the year following that claim. From SAF 2017 you must tick the box in the 'Contracts and Continuing Commitments' section to make your BES claim.

9. Are there any additional cross compliance requirements that I will have to meet?

No, Cross Compliance is a standard set of requirements that apply to all schemes (BPS, LFASS, BES, etc.) in the same way. Full details can be found on the Rural Payments and Services website by clicking on the 'Inspections' heading:

<https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/inspections/all-inspections/cross-compliance/>

10. If I breach the BES scheme rules will this impact on other scheme payments?

No, any breach of the BES rules only effects the payments for the BES scheme

11. Is all the data recording compulsory?

No, there are some data items which are compulsory (e.g. sire details) and some voluntary data items (e.g. cow live-weight) which are optional. The purpose of the scheme is to collect data that farmers will find useful in managing their herd, such as cow weights to calculate cow efficiency figures.

12. Are sire identification details a requirement of Cross Compliance?

No. It is a commitment of the scheme that all data required, including sire identification, has to be provided. However, while it is in your interests to record the

correct sire data if you make a mistake recording the sire identification it won't result in a Cross Compliance penalty.

Carbon Audit and Advisory Services

13. What do I have to do for my carbon Audit?

At the end of August last year, it was confirmed that the tender was awarded to Ricardo Energy & Environment.

Ricardo will contact you by letter explaining who they are and what they do. They will then follow this up with a phone call to arrange a suitable date and time for an advisor to come to your farm to take you through the Carbon Audit process.

If the first year of the scheme for you was 2016, then between September 2017 and the end of March 2018 Ricardo should have been in contact with you to organise a visit to carry out your carbon audit. If this has not happened you should contact Ricardo or the BES Team.

If you have already completed or have booked a Carbon Audit through the Farm Advisory Service, you will not be required to carry out another Carbon Audit at this time but you should have still received contact from an advisor to organise a one-to-one to discuss to help you decide on a GHG management change (please see the scheme guidance as to when you should carry out updates to your audit).

If the first year of the scheme for you was 2017; the Carbon Audit can be anytime from January 2018 till the end of 2018. You will be contacted and have the same input from the advisors as explained above.

14. What do I have to do for the advisory services?

In years 3 through to 5 you will be required to attend advisory services. These will be organised as far as possible round the same areas as the Scottish Government area offices are. You will be contacted by Ricardo letting you know when and where they will take place, in your area. If you require you will also be able to book individual slots with an advisor at these meetings. The advisory service will assist you in making decisions on the other two management changes you have to make, including assisting in the understanding of the genotyping that has been done. We expect the meetings to take approximately 3 hours.

Genotyping

15. How are samples selected and can farmers be notified of the samples required prior to the calves being born?

It is not possible to notify farmers of calves for genotyping before they are born. Animals are selected for genotyping to ensure we balance the genotyping effort

across the population to maximise the value of each animal record and each animal genotype. This will include selecting animals to ensure we optimise the following:

- (i) Information content of the animal data (for example, that we can separate genetic effects from the management effects)
- (ii) breed representation
- (iii) genetic (and genomic) diversity, and
- (iv) diversity in the scheme recorded traits.

The producer will be asked to check their ScotEID account; as this is where a list will be available to show what animals have been selected for sampling.

16. I'm not confident that the samples will get to their destination; based on the FREEPOST address shown on the box.

The wording of the freepost address and the font used is very specifically designed and recommended by Royal Mail. The freepost address is correct and complete and has been working well.

For your own records, and for future verification; you should ask for Proof of Postage from your local Post Office, and retain this for your records. If Proof of Postage is not available, ask the Post Office to date stamp your copy of the Sample Submission Form.

17. While tagging the tag has broken or hasn't obtained a tissue sample. What should I do?

You should use the reason code in the last column of the Sample Submission Form to confirm the problem you've encountered. We may request that you sample more animals the next time round to ensure you meet the Scheme requirements.

18. I haven't managed to sample all my animals at the same time. Can I send off what I have and request another FREEPOST box?

You should arrange to send all samples off at the same time. If you need to carry out sampling in batches; keep the completed samples out of direct sunlight until you are ready to send all the samples off together.

19. I want the samples sent to the farm where the animals are. Can this be taken into consideration?

We can only issue the sample packs to the communication address you have provided on the Rural Payments and Services System. If you update that address, then we can of course in future, issue sample packs to that address.

20. I am a member of a Cattle Society and they store samples for me. Can these be used to meet the Scheme requirements?

No. Unfortunately the genetic information being gathered by the scheme is not comparable to the genetic information held by most breed societies.

21. I tag my animals for BVD. Can I use the same sample to submit for Beef Efficiency Scheme?

The Beef efficiency scheme is separate from BVD testing schemes and you cannot currently submit a BVD sample for BES and vice versa. You will need to take separate samples.

22. What happens if I tag the wrong animal?

Indicate on the form that you have tagged the wrong animal and send the sample in anyway. We will not test this sample, but will take a record of error and an alternative animal will be selected from your herd in a later sampling window, to meet the Scheme requirements.

23. What shall I do if my selected animal is dead or sold?

Indicate on the sample submission form using the appropriate code (0=deceased. 1=sold)

24. Will I get notification that my samples have arrived safely?

Currently there is no system to notify you in real time. We are working to provide a solution to this, and will provide an update when a system is in place. You will get a reminder from SG towards the end of the sampling window if your samples have not yet been received.

25. Is the scheme compulsory for the full five years and who pays for the genotyping after the first three years?

The scheme requirements are compulsory for the full five years. The costs of genotyping by the lab are funded through the scheme for each of the five years. The system for the tissues tags is the same throughout the scheme.

26. I was asked to tag more animals earlier in 2016; from the same age of animals as last time. Why was this?

Some of the considerations in the selection criteria are:

- Representative of breeds and crosses in Scotland
- Still on the holding
- 70% female (for year 1) to allow for calves born early in the scheme to have dam performance records towards the end of the scheme
- Has calving data been recorded

- Representative variation in the traits captured across the population (calving data)

The selection aimed to genotype a representative spread of all the calves recorded for the BES scheme. The time of calving was not included as one of the selection criteria as the timing of calving is not influenced by the genetics of the cattle.

The selection process will continue to be updated throughout the life of the scheme and for calves born in 2017 onward the selection will aim to only request sampling once from each business. Businesses that have an even split of calving in both spring and autumn maybe sent two requests for sampling but we will aim to only select calves that have not previously been through the selection process.

We have also received a number of queries from applicants regarding bulls on their holding that have not been selected. Only bulls recorded as sires for calves born in 2016 on the BES database have been selected. Bulls that had been used on multiple locations were also removed from the most recent selection but will be requested in future tagging rounds. We will request tissue samples from any bulls recorded as sires for calves born in 2017 or future years if they have not previously been sampled for the life of the scheme. we will not however request a sample from Bulls that have been sold.

27. Can you give me more background into the role of genetics under the Beef Efficiency Scheme?

Role of genetic improvement in BES

- Having the right types of animals for your farming system is key to maintaining and improvement profitability and sustainability of your system and the beef industry as a whole.
- Mating decisions play a major role in ensuring you have the best animals in your system, performing at their optimal level. Therefore choosing the right animals to breed from is a key decision to ensure the best quality beef animals for slaughter or for keeping as replacements.
- It is the aim of the BES scheme to collect and collate key industry data (pedigree and phenotypes (The observable physical characteristics) to help develop a new wave of genetic improvement based on records across many industry/commercial farms.

Role of genotyping and genomics in BES

- In addition to genetic merit estimated using “traditional” pedigree information more recently extra source of information has been used to guide selection decisions in many livestock species. This extra source of information is using

the DNA profile of the animal to assess if the animal has good, bad or average genes for each trait being evaluated i.e. for the data that you are recording.

- This DNA profile is typically in the form of a genotype, derived from DNA extracted from an appropriate tissue/blood sample. The combination of such genotypes with performance (and pedigree) information to estimate the genetic merit of animals is more commonly referred to as **genomic selection**.
- Once a tissue sample has been provided for a young animal, the DNA key can be applied to the animal's genotype to assess what combinations of genes they have inherited for each trait. This will then be a (genetic) predictor of the expected future performance of the animal.
- The more information available on animals in the reference population the better the predictions of future performance will be. The selection of animals for genotyping under the scheme will be key to help us maximise the information content of this reference population.
- This will give an indication as to whether the calf once matured, will for example, calve with ease or need a lot of intervention - have calves that are vigorous and suckle quickly; and how aggressive or easy to handle they may be.

How/why will animals' data be used in genomic selection?

- An accurate estimate of the genetic merit of each animal is key and this is best achieved when all contributing systematic environmental effects (e.g., calving number/age of dam, stage of lactation, contemporary group) have been accurately removed from the observed phenotype. Therefore, data (on the calf and the cow, including pedigree and performance records) deemed to be contributing to an animal's estimate of genetic merit for evaluating its usefulness in both the estimation of genetic and genomic merit
- Selection of the optimal genomic selection reference population is important when the reference population is small but the selection process becomes less important when the reference population is very large and based on commercial animals as will be the case in BES.