

Supporting guidance for Cattle Management on Small Units

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For recent changes to this guidance, [check the bottom of the page](#) .

Introduction

There has been a decline in traditional small-scale cattle keeping and the use of native breeds in recent decades. This has been driven by market-led demands and high costs.

The [Cattle Management on Small Units](#) option supports the use of traditional cattle breeds (and crosses) which are generally better suited to grazing natural habitats such as wetlands or hill grazings.

Cattle graze coarse vegetation, opening up the sward with their hooves while their dung supports large numbers of insects. This creates a diverse habitat for flowering plants and invertebrates, and these in turn support farmland birds and other wildlife.

Their non-selective grazing checks the dominance of aggressive grasses such as purple moor-grass and creates diverse mosaics.

If you introduced cattle in a previous agri-environment scheme, you can only claim cattle retention in AECS.

What land is included in the area that qualifies as a small unit?

Your eligibility for this option is based on the area of land in your IACS business permanent land holding that is not rough grazing. This area must be less than 30 hectares.

This area would not take into account areas of land covering rocks, scree, water, dense bracken etc. We will check this using the same approach we use to check land for the Basic Payment Scheme.

If you are in the Crofting Counties, this limit includes the following:

- the area of your croft, and
- any in-bye apportionment, and
- any arable cropped land on the common grazing assigned to you by the common grazing committee

The area does not include the remainder of the common grazing.

The in-bye apportionment applies to that part of the apportionment where the bulk of the land is used for arable or grassland production. Uncultivated field corners and field margins (such as water margins) within this area are included as 'in-bye'.

Where on my holding can I graze the cows I introduce or retain under this option?

Under this option you may graze cattle on any part of the holding, so long as you meet the requirements of any other Agri-Environment Climate Scheme management options you are undertaking.

How will the payment for this option be calculated?

When you apply for this option online you will be asked to declare the number of native breeding cows (up to a maximum of 10), including first crosses, you propose to introduce or retain in your IACS business.

You will require to maintain British Cattle Movement Service records to demonstrate, if required, that you have either introduced or continued to keep at least two breeding females of a traditional or native breed

including first crosses, and maintained them within the IACS business for the lifetime of your contract, and that introduced females were aged 14 months or over at the time of purchase.

You should declare on your Single Application Form each year, all parcels which could be grazed by the cows.

Payment will be based on two hectares per cow introduced or retained according to the published payment rates. The payment will be restricted to the number of hectares relevant to the number of cows you have introduced or retained.

Inspectors will check that the cows are on one or more of the parcels declared on your Single Application Form.

How to increase the success of this option

To avoid over-grazing, you may need to reduce the number of sheep in proportion to the number of cattle you propose to introduce where they will graze the same area.

This option works best where it is combined with other options that benefit wildlife including:

- [Conservation Management of Small Units](#)
- [Summer Hill Grazing of Cattle](#)
- [Cropped Machair](#)
- [Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland](#)
- [Corn Buntings Mown Grassland](#)
- [Chough Mown Grassland](#)
- [Species-rich Grassland Management](#)
- [Forage Brassica Crops for Farmland Birds](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change
Introduction	Extra criteria added regarding cattle introduced during a previous AECS period

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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