

Stock control for the environmental management of designated sites

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

Aim

The aim of this option is to benefit the condition of moorland habitats and contribute towards protecting vulnerable soils by reducing grazing and/or trampling pressure.

Sheep are selective grazers and can influence the types of plants present on moorland, particularly when grazing pressure is high.

Removing some sheep will help ensure that heather and other valuable moorland plants flourish and continue to support a wide range of birds and wildlife, and that vulnerable soils are protected.

Eligibility

Land that is rough grazing and designated as a SSSI, SAC or SPA is eligible.

You should not include 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.

[Assessing your land eligibility](#)

You must combine this option with the [Moorland Management](#) option and, you must identify on a 1:10,000 map the area of moorland that will benefit from stock reduction.

Spatial targeting



[Map of target area – Stock Control \(PDF, Size: 1.0 MB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/AECS-2026---Revised-Stock-control-for-the-environmental-management-of-designated-sites-Target-Map---FINAL---24-March-2026.pdf>

From the 2026 round, this option is only available on moorland sites designated as SSSI, SAC or SPA, and only within the target area shown on this map. However, it may be possible to apply for this option on designated sites outside this area where there is strong justification as endorsed by NatureScot.

You can check if this option is available on your holding using the targeting tool which can be found in the [Management Options and Capital Items](#) page.

Application requirements

You must complete a moorland management plan in accordance with the template below.



[Moorland Management Plan Template \(MS Word, Size: 131.9 kB\)](#)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpaymentsandservices.org/media/resources/AECS-2026---Revised-Moorland-Management-Plan---April-2026-v2.docx>

You must detail in your moorland management plan the number of ewes and gimmers that you propose to dispose of. The plan must take into account the need to avoid under and overgrazing.

The plan must detail the total number of ewes and gimmers recorded on both the holding and the business as of 1 December for the three years prior to application. You must submit flock records alongside your application to support this.

If you have recently acquired the holding, you cannot apply for this option as you do not have three years sheep figures. For succession cases, (where all land and stock transfer to a new owner), you must consult RPID before applying for this option and they will advise if you are eligible.

If new applications for stock control result in a contract, the payment is limited to 5-years. The same sheep that were removed from the business cannot be included in any future applications.

If you are applying for continuation of stock control for the environmental management of designated sites funded under a previous NatureScot or Scottish Government agri-environment contract for designated sites you must provide robust justification that stock control is still required to benefit the habitat.

Only stock control which benefits designated sites will be considered for continuation.

Where you have been in receipt of stock control payments for 15 years or more, AECS will not continue to fund this, therefore, do not include stock control for the environmental management of designated sites in any new application.

If your IACS business has changed significantly since stock control for the environmental management of designated sites was first agreed, (due to purchasing/disposing of additional land and/or stock) then you must re-calculate your IACS business baseline figure, using the last three years figures. If you are a returning AECS applicant and your flock number has further reduced from your agreed Reduced Flock Size, seek pre-application advice from RPID or NatureScot (for designated sites) to determine how much stock control for the environmental management of designated sites can be included in a new application.

Management requirements

You must manage the same location and extent each year for the duration of your contract.

- you must remove the agreed number of sheep from the area subject to payment and your IACS business after you have signed and returned a contract and you have been advised that work can commence. Any sheep must be sold before 31 May in the first year of your contract.
- you must maintain the reduced number from the area subject to payment and you must not exceed the Reduced Flock Size in your IACS business for the period of the contract
- with your first claim, you must provide evidence (proof of sale and movement records) to show the sale or removal of breeding ewes over and above your normal sale of cast ewes, and that the sale or removal was within the required timeframe above
- if receipts from sheep sales do not specify breed and/or age, you must provide this as supplementary information

Payment

You can claim £24.83 per hectare per year.

For the purposes of payment, it is assumed that each ewe or gimmer that you remove will benefit 0.8 hectares of moorland.

A supplement of £8.08 per hectare per year will be available where the stock control will affect your ability to claim Scottish Upland Sheep Support. The supplement is not available where the original stock control took place prior to 2007.

Applications for stock control and Scottish Upland Sheep Support supplement should be restricted to the number of ewes or gimmers (rounded down to the nearest whole number) within a stocking rate of one ewe or gimmer per 0.8 hectares of usable area in each field parcel.

It is proposed that Scottish Upland Sheep Support will be payable on ewe hoggs born on Scottish holdings which have 80 per cent or more of their agricultural land in Scotland's Basic Payment Region Three and less than 200 hectares of agricultural land in Scotland's Basic Payment Region One.

The supplement will only be payable on the proportion of stock control which takes you below one ewe hogg for every four hectares of Region Three land. Further details and a calculator are provided in the [supporting guidance](#).

Inspections

The inspectors will check:

- you have managed the same location and extent each year for the duration of your contract
- you have removed the agreed number of sheep before 31 May in the first year of your undertaking and maintained the reduced number from the area subject to payment
- you must not have exceeded the Reduced Flock Size in your IACS business for the period of the contract. There may be a records check

Additional guidance

[Supporting guidance is available for this option.](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change
Title	Option name change from Stock Disposal to Stock control for the environmental management of designated sites. Whole page reference to stock control for the environmental management of designated sites added.
Spatial targeting	Text added, From the 2026 round, this option is only available on moorland sites designated as SSSI, SAC or SPA. Removed links to archived pages of where to find the targeting tool and simplified stating the targeting tool can be found on the Management Options and Capital Items page
Application requirements	Text added, if new applications for stock control for the environmental management of designated sites result in a contract, the payment is limited to 5-years. The same sheep that were removed from the business cannot be included in any future applications. Stock control other than those that benefited designated sites will not be considered for continuation. Where you have been in receipt of stock control payments for 15 years or more, AECS will not continue to fund this, therefore, do not include stock control for the environmental management of designated sites in any new application.

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