

Supporting guidance for Cutting of Rush Pasture

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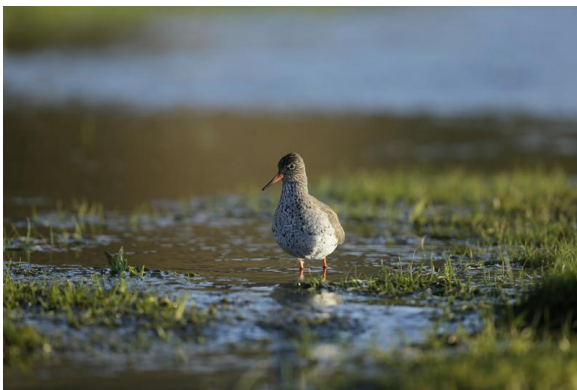
To see recent changes to this guidance, [check the bottom of this page](#).

Introduction

Low levels of rush in damp grassland is beneficial for wading birds. Rushes can provide adults and chicks with shelter from the weather and cover from predators. However, heavy infestations reduce the suitability of the field for waders.

Each of the five target species – lapwing, curlew, oystercatcher, snipe, redshank – have different preferences.

RSPB Scotland's advisory leaflets provide details on individual species needs and how much rush pasture each species can tolerate.



Redshank – Credit: Andy Hay – © RSPB images

What needs to be done?

Rushes should be cut close to the ground – under 10 centimetres. Cutting higher than this will not reduce tussock height or vigour. To achieve more variation in the sward, avoid cutting uniform linear strips. Where possible, removing cuttings because they can mulch down and encourage new rush growth. After cutting graze the area, preferably with cattle, to trample the rushes.

You can cut 20 to 45 per cent of the rushes in the field (this is based on the area of rush within the field, not the overall field size). Assess the area you wish to cut annually and enter this into your plan. You must claim against the number of hectares cut, not the total area of rushes. Keep detailed records in your management diary. Dense rush is eligible for funding.

You should decide on what area of rush needs to be managed for your target wader species by consulting the RSPB advisory leaflets.

Heavy rolling after cutting can also help break down the rootball.

Avoid poaching or creating wheel ruts as this can damage the soil structure and the sward, and encourage the establishment of invasive weeds.

If water levels can be raised, flooding to above the remaining growth can help control rushes. However, this should only be done outwith the breeding season where management is targeting waders.

Where ground conditions permit, either glyphosate or MCPA may be used with a weed-wiper. These chemicals are particularly effective when used on re-growing rush. In both cases, read the product label carefully before use. You should also consult the Scottish Environment Protection Agency about the use of herbicides in or near water. Avoid using herbicides on pastures with a significant presence of sharp-flowered rush, as this is often an indicator of more species-rich wetlands.

Be sure to check the detailed prescriptions of other options that apply to the same land. For example, if the Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland option is in place, you may not roll, harrow or graze from 1 April until 30 June inclusive. The use of herbicides is also restricted.

Which fields to choose?

Choose fields that already support breeding waders or Greenland white-fronted geese and where rush management will create the sward conditions needed by the target species. Read RSPB Scotland's advisory sheets on the target species to understand the cutting regime you will have to implement. There is no advisory leaflet for oystercatcher; if oystercatcher is a target species on your farm, assume they benefit from the same management as lapwing.

To benefit waders the [Cutting of Rush Pasture](#) item requires you to choose fields managed under one of the breeding wader management options – [Wader Grazed Grassland](#) or [Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland](#). This ensures that the field is suitable for breeding waders, and that other agricultural activity in the field does not affect birds in the breeding season.

This item can only be taken as a stand-alone capital item if the field is managed to benefit Greenland white-fronted geese.



Field suitable for rush management – Credit: Hywel Maggs



Field after good rush management – Credit: Hywel Maggs

Complementary options

If managing rush pasture for waders, the item requires you to combine this capital item with one of the following management options (these can be on different areas but must meet the option eligibility criteria):

- [Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland](#)
- [Wader Grazed Grassland](#)

Further information

RSPB habitat management advice note: [Rush Management for Wildlife](#)

Recent changes

Section	Change	Previous text	New text
Introduction	Additional information on the benefit of rushes and the target species.	Low levels of rush in damp grassland is beneficial for wading birds such as lapwing and redshank. Aim for the rushes to cover no more than one-third of the field.	Low levels of rush in damp grassland is beneficial for wading birds. Rushes can provide adults and chicks with shelter from the weather and cover from predators. However, heavy infestations reduce the suitability of the field for waders. Each of the five target species – lapwing, curlew, oystercatcher, snipe, redshank – have different preferences. RSPB Scotland's advisory leaflets provide details on individual species needs and how much rush pasture each species can tolerate.
What needs to be done?	Additional information on rush cutting.	-	You can cut 20 to 45 per cent of the rushes in the field (this is based on the area of rush within the field, not the overall field size). Assess the area you wish to cut annually and enter this into your plan. You must claim against the number of hectares cut, not the total area of rushes. Keep detailed records in your management diary. Dense rush is eligible for funding. You should decide on what area of rush needs to be managed for your target wader species by consulting the RSPB advisory leaflets.
Which fields to choose?	Additional detail on choosing fields.	Choose fields that are good for breeding waders or Greenland White-fronted geese and that would benefit from rush management – i.e. high density of rush tussocks, where more than one-third of the field is covered by rush. To benefit waders the Cutting of Rush Pasture option requires you to choose fields managed under one of the breeding wader annual recurrent options – wader grazed or mown grassland. This ensures that the field is suitable for breeding waders, and that other agricultural activity in the field does not affect birds in the breeding season.	Choose fields that already support breeding waders or Greenland white-fronted geese and where rush management will create the sward conditions needed by the target species. Read RSPB Scotland's advisory sheets on the target species to understand the cutting regime you will have to implement. There is no advisory leaflet for oystercatcher; if oystercatcher is a target species on your farm, assume they benefit from the same management as lapwing. To benefit waders the Cutting of Rush Pasture item requires you to choose fields managed

			under one of the breeding wader annual recurrent options – Wader Grazed Grassland or Wader and Wildlife Mown Grassland. This ensures that the field is suitable for breeding waders, and that other agricultural activity in the field does not affect birds in the breeding season. This item can only be taken as a stand-alone capital item if the field is managed to benefit Greenland white-fronted geese.
Complementary options	Information on the necessity of meeting option eligibility criteria.	If managing rush pasture for waders, the option requires you to combine this capital item with one of the following management options (these can be on different areas):	If managing rush pasture for waders, the item requires you to combine this capital item with one of the following management options (these can be on different areas but must meet the option eligibility criteria):

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