



FARMER LED, FARMER DRIVEN

**Bluetongue and Ecological Focus Areas
Strathspey Monitor Farm Winter Meeting
Carrbridge Hotel, Thurs 13th Nov, 2025**



Malcolm Smith assessing the ecological options at Auchernack

INTRODUCTION

Auchernack Farm, in the heart of the Cairngorms has been in the spotlight as the Strathspey Monitor Farm for the last three years. The Farm's Management Group, a collection of farmers and other professionals, proposed a winter discussion on **Bluetongue** and **Ecological Focus Areas**, two topics likely to top conversations across the Highlands in 2026.

The Family

The Smiths, Malcolm, Sammie and sons Calum and Hamish produce store calves from a 150 strong suckler herd, mainly on grass and silage. They place high value on understanding disease threats to their animals and maintaining their farm's landscape and diverse habitats.

BLUETONGUE

Antonia Brulisauer, Veterinary Adviser at Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), based in Inverness, discussed the Bluetongue virus (BTV) which causes the severe haemorrhagic (bleeding) disease, bluetongue (BT).

- It can infect cattle, sheep and goats, along with wild animals such as deer.
- It is usually spread on farms through the bites of infected *Culicoides* midgies.
- Some BTV strains can transfer from a pregnant animal to her foetus.
- A small number of cases have come through direct contact between ruminants.
- It is mainly controlled through vaccination and movement restrictions.

Bluetongue can lead to high rates of illness, birth defects and even death in flocks and herds, and can affect production (e.g. milk yields and growth).

Bluetongue is a notifiable disease and therefore any suspicions should be reported.

Antonia's presentation is [HERE](#)

Contact: APHA.Scotland@apha.gov.uk

Louise Pearce, Strathspey Vets, highlighted the vital role of local vets in managing Bluetongue.

Contact: enquiries@strathspeyvets.co.uk



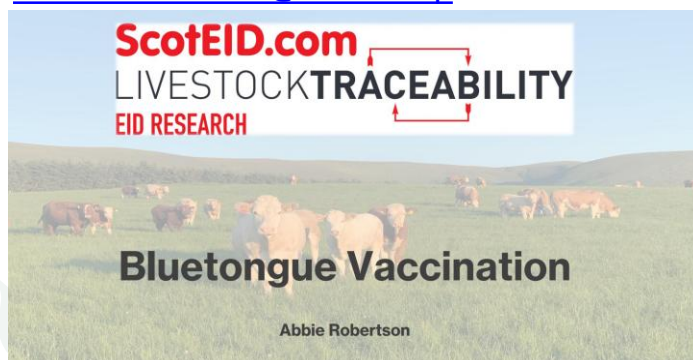
BLUETONGUE VACCINE GUIDANCE

Abbie Robertson, MyHerdStats Programme Manager, highlighted the importance (and legal requirement) of recording all Bluetongue vaccinations for both sheep and cattle.

Abbie's presentation, took the audience, step-by-step through the recording stages found on the ScotEID website. Click on the picture below to go to the presentation. The additional guidance is [HERE](#).

Contact Abbie at

Abbie.Robertson@saos.coop for more info.



Livestock showing Bluetongue symptoms

STRATHSPEY

ECOLOGICAL FOCUS AREAS (EFAs)

EFAs are coming to most mixed farms where fields marked as TGRS (temporary grassland) are included along with combinable crops under the 'arable' category.

From 2026, businesses like the Smith's Auchernack Farm which grow 15 hectares of arable or more (including temporary grass) must undertake greening measures, although certified organic land will remain exempt.

Ian Wilson, NFUS Highland Regional Manager introduced the new EFA rules to the audience. His advice – don't leave the calculations to the last week before the application submission date (15th May 26).

- Guidance on your own EFA calculations is available at the RPID [website](#).
- 2026 greening dates are available from the FAS website [HERE](#) with compliance beginning on the 1st January 2026.

Consultant Jenny McCallum has been asked by the Smiths to look at their farm and propose 2026 greening options based on the 11 EFA options ('interventions') listed on the Rural Payments website.

She presented the calculations and options for Auchernack, from a review of their current holdings, their existing woodland



and environmental schemes and their livestock setup.

JENNY'S EFA PRESENTATION

[VIEW IT HERE](#)

- The presentation illustrates what is now considered arable in a typical Highland farm. Part 1
- Using Auchernack, it shows what the Smiths have that is arable (with a tick) and what is exempt, then lists good options and which may be better left aside. Part 2
- Jenny discusses the pros and cons of the different greening options. Part 3.
- Auchernack's managed areas are shown on the map. Part 4
- Several EFA options are highlighted. Parts 4-7
- She considers her favourite options for this area and Auchernack. Part 8
- Useful links to outwintering (supported by the EFA) and overwintering are provided. Part 9

Contact Jenny to enquire about your own options at jenny@mccallumagri.co.uk or 01456 486579

Auchernack's 2025 fields

5% OF YOUR ARABLE AREA MUST BE AN ECOLOGICAL FOCUS AREA (EFA)

Land Use		Land use area	BPS Claim	LFASS Claim
Turnips for Stock Feed	✓	3.32	3.32	3.32
Spring Barley	✓	7.60	7.60	0.00
Wild Bird Seed	✓	0.68	0.68	0.00
Permanent Grassland	✗	25.10	25.10	25.10
Rotational Grass Year 1	✓	7.08	7.08	7.08
Rotational Grass Year 2	✓	12.01	12.01	12.01
Rotational Grass Year 3	✓	9.99	9.99	9.99
Rotational Grass Year 5	✓	6.00	6.00	6.00
Open Woodland (Grazed)	✗	80.84	80.84	80.84
Rough Grazing	✗	177.07	176.69	176.69
Generic Exclusion	✗	3.24	0.00	0.00
Total		332.93	329.31	321.03

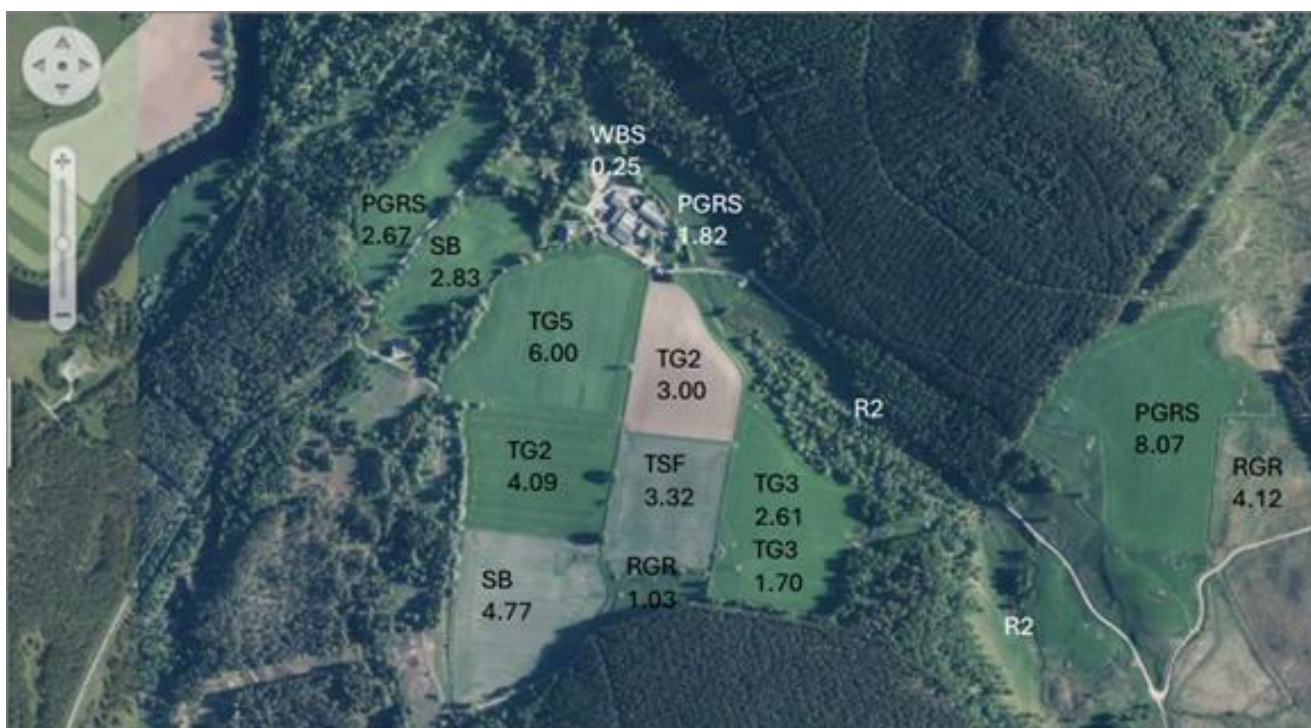
Red tick =
arable under
new EFA
standards

TOTAL ARABLE = 46.68ha

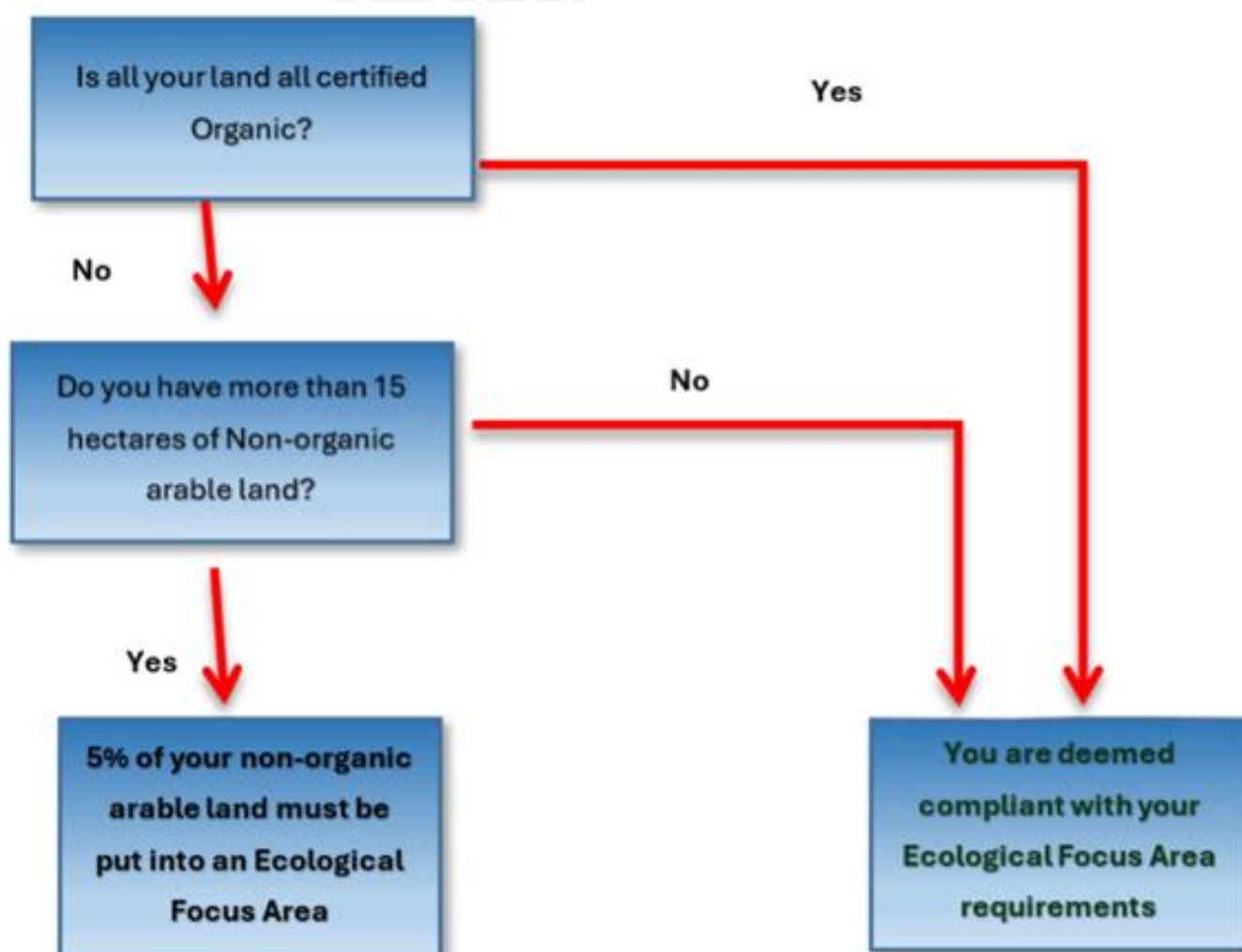
EFA REQUIRED @ 5%
= 2.34 ha

TGRS 1-5 = TEMPORARY GRASS EX ARABLE & PGRS = PERMANENT GRASS (6 YR+)

Auchernack farm 2025 fields



Do the EFA requirements apply to me?





**MONITOR
FARM**
Scotland

To find out more or to sign up, please contact:

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monitorfarms.co.uk

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