

## OFC announcement – Livestock and Grassland messaging

2024 will see the biggest upgrade to farming schemes since the start of the agricultural transition; we are backing our farmers by: increasing payment rates by 10%, making schemes more flexible and easier to access, and publishing detailed information to give farmers greater certainty.

### Our Vision

- Farmers who keep livestock and/or have grassland on their farm will continue to produce sustainable food, coupled with actions that also support our natural environment.
- We are launching around 50 new actions.
- We will continue to pay for the existing actions available in SFI and CS, including hedges, improving soil health and nutrient management.

### What is New

- Historically, we have paid much higher prices for actions involving creating or restoring habitats and features, and lower prices to maintain them. Farmers and land managers have told us that they feel that those who have already undertaken the 'creation' or 'restoration' activities are at an unfair disadvantage.
- We're re-balancing the payments for 'creation' and 'maintenance' actions, in particular for grassland habitats, so that those who have already made changes are not disadvantaged. For example, the price for maintaining species rich grassland will increase on 1 Jan 2024, from £182 to £646.
- Moving forward we will be paying for the costs of creating a grassland habitat in full, up front, as a separate capital grant offer. This will enable us to increase regular payments, as above.
- In 2024 we plan to introduce new **support for endemic disease management**. BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea) in cattle, PRRS (Porcine Reproductive Respiratory Syndrome) in pigs and a broader sheep health approach for a range of endemic disease and conditions.
- We will trial programmes that provide financial support for farmers to improve stockmanship and adopt best practices in livestock husbandry. This will focus on reducing the stresses on finishing pigs and improved pain management for cattle during disbudding and castration.

### What has been Improved

- Farmers can apply, at a time which suits them, for a **free vet visit** (Annual Health and Welfare Review) through the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) to keepers of pigs, sheep, and cattle. **Applications have recently been simplified and you no longer need to be currently claiming BPS to apply.** Farmers should apply now to get a funded annual visit from their chosen vet or team of vets.
- We will continue to roll this offer out, widening it so that vet visits can cover multiple herds/flocks.
- In 2024, we will **continue to offer a range of grants** which support improving animal health and welfare, with funding for cattle, poultry and pig farmers. This will include infrastructure grants which support farmers to replace old run-down buildings with those futureproofed for a changing climate and equipped with latest innovations to improve productivity.
- We are making the **actions more flexible**, for example around when you can cut, top and graze, while still achieving the desired outcomes for soil health.