

Supporting guidance for Stock Disposal

Date published: 31 January, 2025

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

Introduction

The [Stock Disposal](#) option supports the regeneration of heather and other moorland vegetation by reducing grazing pressure.

High herbivore pressure can suppress the growth of heather and other plants, and lead to loss of cover of these plants in favour of more grazing-resistant species.

It can also result in excessive trampling which in turn could lead to the erosion of peaty soils and carbon loss. In some cases grazing management alone is not enough to reduce the pressure to levels required for habitat improvement so reducing the number of sheep may bring about the necessary improvement.

How to increase the success of this option

The best results from a stock reduction will be achieved by a targeted effort to reduce grazing to a desired level in a desired place.

If your hill is split into separate LPID's, include all LPIDs where Stock Disposal is taking place and ensure the Moorland Management Plan clearly explains this.

You will need a good understanding of the number of sheep grazing specific habitat areas, and the seasonality of this grazing, to draw up the stock reduction aspect of your moorland management plan.

Remove stock from those areas of hill where the habitat would benefit from a reduced grazing pressure. On large hefted hills, remove sheep from the hefts where the habitats are under pressure.

Once the flock has been reduced, the natural instinct of the remaining sheep will be to redistribute and fill the space.

To avoid this redistribution, discourage sheep from hefting to the target area or encourage them to graze elsewhere by changing your shepherding, feeding practices and other moorland activities.

In planning a stock reduction, the effects on the deer population and any cattle grazing should be considered, as both are likely to be attracted to areas with fewer sheep.

The moorland management and grazing plan should cover these issues and any steps you take to make any adjustments.

How to calculate your baseline flock number

In your plan, provide details of 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. This must be supported by clear flock records submitted alongside your application.

If you have recently acquired the holding, you cannot apply for stock disposal, 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.

The reference year taken for baseline data will be the year with the lowest number of ewes and gimmers (baseline flock number). The agreed reduction will be deducted from this baseline flock number unless you can produce valid evidence to support using a different year.

The resulting number of ewes and gimmers is termed the **Reduced Flock Size** for the business or common grazings. Please note, you cannot exceed this agreed level of ewes and gimmers over **the whole IACS business** (not just the hill flock) for the duration of your AECS contract.

The ewes must be disposed of by 31 May in the first year of the contract and not transferred to any other part of the business holdings. If you have had a previous stock disposal agreement, provide the agreed figures submitted to determine the baseline flock number.

However, if your IACS business has changed significantly since stock disposal was agreed, due to purchasing additional land and stock or disposing of stock, then you MUST contact RPID before applying to AECS to allow them to re-calculate a revised IACS business baseline figure.

A supplement of £8.08 per hectare per year will be available where the stock disposal will affect your ability to claim Scottish Upland Sheep Support.

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 disposal payments which take you below one ewe hogg for every four hectares of Region Three land.

If you already have an agri-environment agreement supporting stock disposal and wish to continue to receive payments for maintaining the flock at the reduced flock size, this is acceptable where the maintained reduction is required to keep the target area in good condition. In this case, the reduction number you can claim for will be based on your previous commitment unless the flock has been reduced further, in which case you will need to reduce your stock disposal application.

You cannot continue to claim stock disposal following on from a legacy scheme, if the farm business is currently stocked significantly below the agreed reduced flock size.

If you wish to reduce sheep numbers further, you must explain the benefit of this action. In this case the stock reduction figure would be deducted from the previous reduced flock size to give a revised reduced flock size.

Scottish Upland Sheep Support supplement

If you participate in the Stock Disposal option through the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme you may be eligible to receive the Scottish Upland Sheep Support (SUSS) supplement to compensate you for the support you may have been eligible to receive through Pillar 1 direct payments if you had not disposed of stock.

To be eligible for the Pillar 1 SUSS scheme at least 80 per cent of your agricultural land must be in Payment Region Three and less than 200 hectares of your agricultural land in Payment Region One. The number of ewe hoggs you can claim will depend on the area of Payment Region Three land you have. One ewe hogg will need four hectares of Payment Region Three land to support it.

To be eligible for the stock disposal SUSS supplement you must meet the Pillar 1 SUSS scheme eligibility rules.

You can use this calculator to help you check your eligibility for the SUSS supplement and calculate the number of ewes and gimmers eligible for stock disposal and the SUSS supplement payments based on the number of ewes and gimmers you plan to dispose of.



[SUSS supplement calculator \(MS Excel, Size: 19.4 kB\)](https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Stock-Disposal-Supplement-Calculator-02-04-2015-v2.xlsx)

doc_external_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Stock-Disposal-Supplement-Calculator-02-04-2015-v2.xlsx>

The supplement will be based on the difference in the assumed number of ewe hoggs you could claim for SUSS after stock disposal, compared to the assumed number that you could have claimed prior to the disposal. It is limited to the proportion of stock disposal payments which take you below one ewe hogg for every four hectares of Payment Region Three land.

The SUSS supplement calculator assumes 80 per cent lambs weaned, 50 per cent female and 97 per cent survival to one year old.

The following examples demonstrate scenarios where you may or may not be eligible to claim the supplementary payment.

Example 1

Farm A has a total farm area of 1,000 hectares – made up of 199 hectares in Region One and 801 hectares in Region Three. Before entering into the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme, the farm had 800 ewes and gimmers and reduces numbers to 600.

Prior to stock disposal the maximum ewe hoggs that this farm could claim under the SUSS scheme would be 200 (801 Payment Region Three hectares / 4).

Stock disposal payment will be calculated based on 200 ewes and gimmers.

Prior to stock disposal the SUSS supplement calculator assumes that the flock produced 310 ewe hoggs, which is 110 in excess of the maximum (200) which could be claimed under SUSS based on 801 hectares of Payment Region Three land. With the reduced flock size (600), the SUSS supplement calculator assumes the farm will still produce enough ewe hoggs (232) to claim the maximum allowed under the Pillar 1 SUSS scheme, and therefore would not be eligible to claim the SUSS supplement payment.

Example 2

Farm B has a total farm area 1,000 hectares – made up of 199 hectares in Region 1 and 801 hectares in Payment Region Three. Before entering into the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme, the farm had 600 ewes and reduces ewe numbers to 350.

Prior to stock disposal the maximum ewe hoggs that this farm could claim under the SUSS scheme would be 200 (801 Payment Region Three hectares / 4).

Stock disposal payment will be calculated based on 250 ewes and gimmers.

Prior to stock disposal the SUSS supplement calculator assumes that the flock produced 232 ewe hoggs, which is 32 in excess of the maximum (200) which could be claimed under SUSS based on 801 hectares of Payment Region Three land. With the reduced flock size (350), the SUSS supplement calculator assumes the farm will produce 135 ewe hoggs (65 less than the maximum of 200 before the stock disposal).

SUSS supplement will be payable on the assumed proportion of stock disposal which takes the flock below one ewe hogg for every four hectares of Payment Region Three land. In this example, take the proportion of 65 (being the reduced number of ewe hoggs below the maximum of 200) over 97 (being the difference in ewe hoggs pre and post stock disposal), and apply to the total stock disposal numbers (250).

The number of ewes and gimmers calculated to be eligible for the SUSS supplement is $(65/97) \times 250 = 167$.

Example 3

Farm C has a total farm area 1,000 hectares – made up of 199 hectares in Payment Region One and 801 hectares in Payment Region Three. Before entering into the Agri-Environment Climate Scheme, the farm had 500 ewes and reduced ewes to 350. Prior to stock disposal the maximum ewe hoggs that this farm could claim under the SUSS scheme would be 200 (801 Payment Region Three hectares / 4).

Stock disposal payment will be calculated based on 150 ewes and gimmers.

Prior to stock disposal the SUSS supplement calculator assumes that the flock produced 194 ewe hoggs, which is less than the maximum (200) which could be claimed under SUSS based on 801 hectares of Payment Region Three land. With the reduced flock size (350), the SUSS supplement calculator assumes the farm will produce 135 ewe hoggs (59 less than the flock is assumed to produce before the stock disposal).

SUSS supplement will be payable on all the stock disposal (150) as the flock is calculated to be below one ewe hogg for every four hectares of Payment Region Three land before and after the stock disposal.

Further information

For more information see [A Guide to Upland Habitats: Surveying Land Management Impacts - Volume 1](#) from NatureScot.

Stocking levels appropriate to each site will vary with factors such as aspect, soil and vegetation and habitat type, local climate and altitude. The [Moorland Management](#) option provides guidance for grazing for different moorland habitats.

Recent changes

Section	Change
How to calculate your baseline flock number	Updated text – you must have clear flock records with your application. If already have an agri-environment agreement supporting stock disposal and your flock has reduced further, you must reduce your stock disposal application.

Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

[Download guidance](#)

Click 'Download this page' to create a printer-friendly version of this guidance that you can save or print out.