

SPRING GRAZING LICENCES: KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR LANDOWNERS

With many grazing licences commencing in early spring, now is a key time for landowners to ensure that appropriate agreements are in place.

While grazing licences are often seen as straightforward arrangements, in practice they play an important role in defining responsibilities, maintaining management control of land and supporting compliance with wider regulatory and taxation requirements.



WHY GRAZING LICENCES MATTER

A well-structured grazing licence provides clarity over how land is managed and used. Without a formal agreement in place, there is a greater risk of misunderstandings around responsibilities, as well as potential complications in demonstrating management control for taxation and Rural Payments Agency (RPA) purposes.

Ensuring that agreements accurately reflect what is happening on the ground is essential.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

When preparing or reviewing a grazing licence, several factors should be carefully considered:

- **Management control of the land**

The licence should clearly establish that the landowner retains control of the land and its management.

- **Defined responsibilities**

Responsibilities for fertiliser application, land management and boundary maintenance should remain with the landowner, while stock welfare and day-to-day livestock management sit with the licensee.

- **Taxation and scheme eligibility**

A formal agreement can help demonstrate active farming status where required for taxation and RPA schemes, supported by appropriate records and accounts.

- **Environmental schemes**

Where land is entered into CSS or SFI schemes, licence terms should reflect the requirements of those schemes, including stocking levels and any management prescriptions.

- **Water usage and practical considerations**

Periods of dry weather can significantly increase water consumption. Recording meter readings and agreeing reimbursement terms can help avoid disputes.

- **Public Rights of Way**

Landowners remain responsible for maintaining access. Consideration should also be given to livestock restrictions, including the presence of bulls, and whether additional measures such as Section 31 deposits may be appropriate.

STRUCTURING THE LICENCE

Grazing licences are typically structured for periods of less than 12 months, often running from March through to October or November depending on location, weather conditions and livestock type.

Ensuring the duration and terms are appropriate is important in maintaining the intended legal and practical position.

WHAT THAT MEANS IN PRACTICE

In our experience, issues most commonly arise where grazing arrangements are informal or where agreements do not reflect how land is actually being managed.

Taking the time to structure licences correctly at the outset can help avoid complications later in the season and ensure that land continues to meet regulatory and scheme requirements.

Newton's rural team advises landowners on grazing licences and wider estate management, providing practical, clear advice tailored to each holding.

If you are putting grazing arrangements in place this season, or reviewing existing agreements, please [contact](#) our rural team to discuss how we can support you.



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