



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Call for Evidence on updating the Native Breed at Risk (NBAR) List

May 2024

We are the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We are responsible for improving and protecting the environment, growing the green economy, sustaining thriving rural communities and supporting our world-class food, farming and fishing industries.

We work closely with our 33 agencies and arm's length bodies on our ambition to make our air purer, our water cleaner, our land greener and our food more sustainable. Our mission is to restore and enhance the environment for the next generation, and to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.



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## Purpose and audience of this Call for Evidence

The purpose of this targeted Call for Evidence is to give stakeholders in the native breed sector the opportunity to share their views and provide evidence on proposed changes to the UK's NBAR list. There is the potential that the proposed amendments, detailed in this Call for Evidence, will impact on eligibility for agri-environment payments, where the NBAR is used as the vehicle to determine scheme eligibility.

We would welcome views from those who use the list on the proposals we are making.

Defra is continuing to engage with the Devolved Administrations in relation to the NBAR list.

## Duration

This Call for Evidence will run for 6 weeks. This is in line with the Cabinet Office's 'Consultation Principles' which advises government departments to adopt proportionate consultation and Call for Evidence procedures. The Call for Evidence opens on 13 May 2024 and closes on 24 June 2024.

## Responding to the Call for Evidence

We do encourage all respondents to complete the online survey wherever possible.

Please respond online using the Citizen Space Call for Evidence at:

<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/genetic-science-and-conservation/f6e60ba7>

Alternatively, you can respond by email to [NBARcallforevidence@defra.gov.uk](mailto:NBARcallforevidence@defra.gov.uk) using the subject line: Call for Evidence on updating the NBAR.

Or in writing to: Call for Evidence on updating the NBAR, Defra, Second Floor, Seacole Building, 2 Marsham Street London SW1P 4DF.

As we are seeking consolidated views from representatives in the native breed sector in the UK, we will only be analysing responses from those we have directly invited, or invited through the breed society/organisation, to respond.

## After the Call for Evidence has closed

Responses received by 23:59 on the 24 June will be analysed and used to inform policy development on the NBAR list, as well as policy in relation to the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources. The NBAR list is used to determine eligibility for payments under agri-environment schemes, such as Countryside Stewardship (SP8 – Native breeds at risk supplement). In addition, the responses will be summarised. This summary will be shared with respondents and policy officials in the devolved governments.

This information will also contribute to our stakeholder engagement activity and help inform policy development in this important area.

## Confidentiality and data protection information

A summary of responses to this Call for Evidence will be provided to all those who have responded. An annex will list all organisations that responded but will not include personal names, addresses or other contact details.

Defra may include the content of your response in the summary of responses without your personal name and private contact details (for example email address, etc).

If you click on 'Yes' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, you are asked to state clearly what information you would like to be kept as confidential and explain your reasons for confidentiality.

The reason for this is that information in responses to this Call for Evidence may be subject to release to the public or other parties in accordance with the access to information law (these are primarily the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)). We have obligations, mainly under the EIRs, FOIA and DPA, to disclose information to particular recipients or to the public in certain circumstances. In view of this, your explanation of your reasons for requesting confidentiality for all or part of your response would help us balance these obligations for disclosure against any obligation of confidentiality. If we receive a request for the information that you have provided in your response to this Call for Evidence, we will take full account of your reasons for requesting confidentiality of your response, but we cannot guarantee that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

If you click on 'No' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, we will be able to release the content of your response to the public, but we won't make your personal name and private contact details publicly available.

There may be occasions when Defra will share the information you provide in response to the Call for Evidence, including any personal data with external analysts. This is for the purposes of Call for Evidence response analysis and provision of a report of the summary of responses only.

## Compliance with the consultation principles

This Call for Evidence is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office “Consultation Principles” which can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>.

Please find our latest privacy notice uploaded as a related document alongside our Call for Evidence document.

If you have any comments or complaints about the Call for Evidence process, please address them to:

By email: [consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk)

Or in writing to:

Defra Consultation Co-ordinator,  
Ground Floor of Seacole,  
Desk G125,  
2 Marsham Street,  
London,  
SW1 4DF.

## What is the NBAR and what is it used for in the UK?

The UK’s Native Breeds at Risk (NBAR) list is a tool created by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra). The list was originally developed under the Rural Development Programme for England, with reference to thresholds, set by the European Commission for use throughout the EU.

The NBAR list plays a dual role in not only spotlighting the vulnerability of native breeds at risk in the UK, but also determining payment eligibility for agri-environment schemes. In England, the purpose of the native breed at risk supplement (under SP8 of the Country Stewardship scheme) is to conserve genetic diversity in native breeds at risk, and to help ensure the number of NBAR stock on the farm will increase or be maintained. This supports actions to ensure breeds will not become extinct. The Devolved Governments

are yet to set out their position on agri-environment payment schemes based on the NBAR list.

Using evidence from Defra's [national breed inventory](#), the list is reviewed annually, at which point breeds can be added or removed depending on any increase or decrease in population numbers compared to the thresholds.

## The proposed changes

As the UK has now exited the EU, we have decided to review and have proposed amendments to update the UK NBAR list. This ties in with wider activity on developing and updating schemes in England, including for native breeds, that will use the list to inform eligibility for relevant Environmental Land Management schemes.

We propose to create a new list called the '**Native Breed Support (NBS) List**', which will better align with international United Nations Food and Agriculture (FAO) thresholds. We also propose to amend original and semi-feral population categories to better reflect conservation policy on breeds at risk.

Although Agriculture is a devolved matter, we recognise that the sector operates on a UK wide basis. Defra is working together with the Governments in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland on the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources. We have engaged with the administrations in Devolved Governments and sought advice from our independent Advisory Committee UK Genetics for Livestock and Equines Committee (UKGLE) and key stakeholders, who are broadly in agreement with our proposals. Defra will share the summary of responses with the administrations in the Devolved Governments.

## Changing population thresholds

The NBAR list was originally established under EU legislation using thresholds set by the European Commission. Now that the UK has left the EU, there is an opportunity to recast this list to include all recognised native breeds and populations, including those not classified as at risk. This will provide more data on all native breeds of livestock in the UK and target conservation support to breeds at risk.

The new NBS list will be more fit for purpose and bring threshold boundaries in line with international FAO guidelines. We are proposing to use the estimated pedigree breeding female data for each breed. We will take this data from the national breed inventory.

Use of these internationally recognised standards reflects independent scientific advice from Defra's UK Genetics for Livestock and Equines Committee (UKGLE), who consider EU thresholds too high when considering "at risk" status, which means they do not focus breeder support effectively and efficiently. It will also align our reporting at national level,

into systems such as the FAO Domestic Animal Diversity System (DAD-IS). These international standards are also used by the Rare Breeds Survival Trust “Watchlist”. Introducing the FAO tiered system would also allow us the option to tier payments based on endangerment rating should we decide to do so in the future. The UK Breed Inventory, administered by Defra, will continue to be used as the basis for determining relevant breed populations.

Utilising the latest inventory data, the proposed changes may mean that breeds currently on the NBAR list may no longer meet the threshold for inclusion under the new NBS list.

## What does this mean for farmers in England?

The new list would recognise all UK native livestock and categorise them according to estimated breeding female population. Only those breeds in the “at risk” categories (critical, endangered and vulnerable) will be eligible for agri-environment payments. Those breeds with population numbers above the threshold to be considered “at risk” will not be eligible for agri-environment payments. This list will be updated annually in line with the [annual breed inventory](#).

The Environmental Stewardship (ES) (England) Regulations 2005, which originally created the NBAR list for its scheme, is closed to new applications. The changes proposed in this call for evidence will not affect current NBAR agreements under the ES or Countryside Stewardship schemes.

Figures for the current thresholds set by the NBAR list (Table 1), and the proposed new thresholds for the NBS list (Table 2) are listed below:

**Table 1** - The current population thresholds for inclusion on the UK NBAR list

Species	Number of estimated pedigree breeding females
Cattle	< 7,500
Equines	< 5,000
Goats	< 10,000
Sheep	< 10,000
Pigs	< 15,000
Poultry	< 25,000

**Table 2** - The new NBS List thresholds based on [FAO guidance](#).

Species	Number of estimated pedigree breeding females			
	critical	endangered	vulnerable	not at risk
Cattle	< 300	< 3,000	< 6,000	> 6,000
Equines	< 300	< 3,000	< 6,000	> 6,000
Goats	< 300	< 3,000	< 6,000	> 6,000



Sheep	< 300	< 3,000	< 6,000	> 6,000
Pigs	< 100	< 1,000	< 2,000	> 2,000
Poultry	< 100	< 1,000	< 2,000	> 2,000

The proposed reduction in thresholds for pigs and poultry is aligned to FAO guidance on at risk conservation. Species differ greatly in their reproductive capacities. Species with low reproductive capacity, such as the horse, are at relatively greater risk than those with high reproductive capacity, such as the pig. This is because in species with lower reproductive capacity, recovery from a population decline will take more time and more generations of breeding.<sup>1</sup> This is reflected in Table 2 above, where those with high reproductive capacity have a lower threshold.

## Original populations

Original Populations (OPs), also known as "Traditional Populations," are distinct subsets within pedigree cattle breeds that lack any imported genetics, even from the same breed. Within these populations all cattle are of British origin and have not been bred with cattle of the same breed from other countries, including those with recognised breeding programmes.

The conservation of original populations is the responsibility of the breed society as part of conserving the genetic diversity of the whole breed. Breed societies often record animals of original populations in a separate class of main section of the herd book or highlight them as original/traditional. Currently, 30 native cattle breeds are recorded in the Annual Breed Inventory, with 4 breeds, namely Aberdeen-Angus, British Friesian, Dairy Shorthorn and Hereford having designated original populations.

Defra's UK Genetics for Livestock and Equines Committee advised that, in line with international guidance, conservation of native breeds policy should be based on whole breed populations. This is to make sure that conservation support is focused on conserving the widest genetic diversity among those native breeds at greatest risk of extinction. They also advised that original populations should be merged with their main breed in UK Government conservation programmes to strengthen data reliability in the Annual Breed Inventory to support establishing the correct population size.

## What does this mean for farmers in England?

In merging population data with the whole breed, this would mean original population breeders would not be able to access agri-environment support payments where the whole breed's estimated pedigree breeding female population is not classified as "at risk"

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<sup>1</sup> [In vivo guidance on Animal Genetic Resources](#)

(i.e. being within the ‘critical’, ‘endangered’ or ‘vulnerable’ categories) under the new thresholds (Table 2). Merging OPs on the new Native Breed Support (NBS) list ensures fair support payments, based on whole breed population and allows payments to be focused towards the most vulnerable breeds at risk.

This will not impact breeders where there are current live ES/CS native breed at risk supplement agreements in place. Any agreements currently in place will remain in payment until the end of the agreement.

## **Semi feral populations**

Defra has committed to supporting semi-feral populations under s.1(1)(g) of the Agriculture Act 2020. We have been working on a process to enable recognition of these populations, and this is now in place.

We therefore propose to include herds/flocks recognised as heritage populations on the NBS list, giving them equal status to pedigree breeds on the list.

These changes will help Defra meet international commitments on conservation of genetic resources for future generations, for example, Target 4 of the Convention on Biological Diversity Kunming/Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and will help support increased breed numbers over time.

### **What does this mean for Farmers in England?**

This means that breeders of semi-feral populations included on the new NBS list will be eligible to claim native breed related agri-environment payments.

## **Conclusion of impacts on farmers in England**

To support the transition from the NBAR list to the NBS list, we will implement in a way that gives businesses time to adapt to the change in Scheme eligibility.

Any breeders affected by the proposed changes to the NBAR will still be able to seek wider livestock support offered through other payment programmes such as the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) and Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs). Existing Countryside Stewardship (CS) native breed supplement agreements will remain in place until they end.

These proposed changes will focus support on breeds most at risk and recognise previously excluded at risk populations. These changes aim to direct conservation support to breeds that are at risk of extinction.

# Questions

## Confidentiality

**1. Would you like your responses to be kept confidential?**

- Yes
- No

If yes, why?

(comment box)

## About you

**2. Please tell us who you are responding as, selecting from the following:**

- Native livestock keeper
- Individual native breeder
- Breed society
- Breeding organisation
- Breeding company
- Representative body
- Other

**3. Which native breed do you or your organisation keep, farm or represent?**

(comment box)

**4. What is your name, and/or the name of your organisation?**

(comment box)

**5. What is your email address?**

(comment box)

**6. Please indicate which location(s) your response relates to, select all that apply**

- England
- Scotland
- Wales
- Northern Ireland
- Non-UK (International)

## The existing NBAR list

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the current NBAR list and its thresholds (retained from the EU Rural Development Legislation) are fit for purpose to support the UK's most at risk native breeds?

Species	Number of Pedigree breeding females
Cattle	< 7,500
Equines	< 5,000
Goats	< 10,000
Sheep	< 10,000
Pigs	< 15,000
Poultry	< 25,000

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

8. Please explain your answer to the question above

(comment box)

## The proposed changes/the new NBS list

9. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to create the Native Breed Support (NBS) list and changing the thresholds to be in line with FAO thresholds?

Species	Number of estimated pedigree breeding females					
		critical		endangered	vulnerable	not at risk
Cattle	< 300	< 3,000	< 6,000		> 6,000	
Equines	< 300	< 3,000	< 6,000		> 6,000	
Goats	< 300	< 3,000	< 6,000		> 6,000	
Sheep	< 300	< 3,000	< 6,000		> 6,000	
Pigs	< 100	< 1,000	< 2,000		> 2,000	
Poultry	< 100	< 1,000	< 2,000		> 2,000	

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

- Don't know

**10. Please explain your answer to the question above**

(Comment box)

**11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to remove original populations from the Native Breed Support (NBS) list?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**12. Please explain your answer to the question above**

(Comment box)

**13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposal to include semi feral populations in the Native Breed Support (NBS) list?**

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

**14. Please explain your answer to the question above**

(Comment box)

**15. Do you think there will be any impacts that the proposed measures above might have that we have not considered?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**16. Please explain your answer to the question above**

(Comment box)

**17. Are there any additional, or alternative changes that you would like to see made to the NBAR/NBS list?**

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

**18. Please explain your answer to the question above**

(Comment box)

## Other comments

**19. Do you have any other comments on this topic? Please provide further details on your answer below.**

(Comment box)

## Required Feedback Questionnaire

Dear Respondent

Thank you for taking your time to participate in this online survey. It would be appreciated, if you can provide us with an insight into how you view the tool and the area(s) you feel is in need of improvement, by completing our feedback questionnaire.

**Overall, how satisfied are you with our online Call for Evidence tool?**

Please give us any comments you have on the tool, including suggestions on how we could improve it.

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied
- Don't know

(Comment box)