



Welcome to your Farm Cluster Newsletter

Here's what we've been up to in the last month - if you have any questions about the stories in this newsletter or suggestions for future articles, please contact: [Ross Wingfield](#) or [Christine Meadows](#).

Check your ash trees this month for health and safety

September is the last month this year when you can easily carry out a check of your ash trees to see how 'ash dieback' has affected them. This is important where there is public access near to ash trees, as branches infected with die-back break easily and may fall during winter storms.



What is it? Ash dieback is a chronic fungal disease of ash trees causing leaf loss and crown dieback. It is expected that most ash trees will die from the disease in the coming years. It is not the ash dieback itself, but subsequent infections with honey fungus that cause the tree canopies to become brittle. It is usually only possible to plan for any tree work whilst there are still leaves on the trees and ash dieback can be identified.

What to look out for: In general, if the size of the dead branches that might fall are large enough to cause harm, and the area beneath has public access, it is advisable to reduce the size of the tree crown before it becomes a potential hazard. If the canopy loss is more than 50%, an ash is unlikely to recover from dieback, so large trees will need careful and expert examination.

What should you do? Please consult a qualified and insured arborist for work on individual or small numbers of trees, see www.trees.org.uk. Arborists prefer to work on the trees before they become brittle, and the cost of any work may be less at this stage. Check the Forestry Commission's new advice for land managers who are responsible for individual and small groups of ash trees that are likely to be infected by ash dieback here on: www.gov.uk.

If you have a substantial area of ash woodland that is dying, there are tree health grants to support replanting, but no grants to assist with felling of the dead trees. Again, a specialist forester should be asked to look at the work in case there is a need for special equipment to harvest the ash in a safe way. Information on woodland health grants can be found here on: www.gov.uk.

Contacts:

Ross Wingfield:

ross.wingfield@highweald.org

01424 725604

Christine Meadows:

christine.meadows@highweald.org

01424 723009

Upcoming free or subsidised Farm Cluster events

- **26 September, 10am to 1pm: Autumn Deer Management Launch**, Beech Estate near Battle. Get off to a good start managing deer on your land and with your neighbours. Find out about assessing the impact of deer and getting the best out of stalking contracts. Booking via [Eventbrite](#).
- **25 October, 1.30 to 6.30pm: High Weald Farming Futures conference, 'Building Soils, Resilience and Profit'**, Crowborough community Centre. An unmissable opportunity to join national farming pioneers, Stephen Briggs, Tim May and Charles Burrell, for an engaging discussion on using regenerative agriculture practices to improve soils, farm resilience and profits. Booking now open on [Eventbrite](#).

Join the Farm Cluster's deer management effort this season

As the first hints of autumn appear, the time for stepping up management of deer numbers is here - it's key for healthy wildlife habitats and to protect trees, crops and motorists. And it's not just woodlands and crops: recent calculations estimate that groups of deer on pasture can eat £5,000 of fodder from over 50 acres in a year.



The High Weald AONB team invite you to a season launch event at Beech Estate, Battle on 26 September to help you get good results from your deer stalkers, continuing to work together with neighbouring landowners - key for effective deer management. Booking via [Eventbrite](#).

During this event, we'll see the effects of good deer management on woodland health, review approaches to managing your stalkers and revisit how to assess deer impact.

If you're not able to join this event and you'd like to improve your deer management, please call Christine or Ross. Also see our practical [deer management guidance](#) on our website.

Group / Member news

Sussex Lund Grant Awards: Congratulations to the farm cluster members who successfully applied for Sussex Lund funding, of which £34,000 was offered for projects that have benefits for wildlife, as well as for farm management, outside of Countryside Stewardship options.

Countryside Stewardship agreements: A reminder from Ross - please could those who haven't done so yet send him a copy of your Countryside Stewardship agreement map in whichever way is easiest - perhaps a scan or photo (Mobile: 07548 702609 or Ross.Wingfield@highweald.org). He'd like to see landowners' options across the Cluster to make sure we're giving you the most useful training and guidance. Thanks to those who have sent theirs in so far.

About:

The Upper Rother and Dudwell Farm Cluster helps farmers, foresters and other land managers work together to improve farm profitability and benefit soil, water, wildlife and historic features not just on their individual farms, but across the area. It has 58 members covering over 3,500ha. The Cluster is helped by the High Weald AONB Partnership with financial support from Natural England's Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund, the Environment Agency (Giant Hogweed control), and the Woodland Trust (deer management). Visit the Upper Rother & Dudwell Farm Cluster page at www.highweald.org