

# Countryside Calendar – February



Tractor and Harrow preparing soil for planting © Lorne Gill SNH

## Livestock

Watch out for farm vehicles taking feed to livestock or spreading farmyard manure and slurry – this will take place as soon as the ground is dry enough. Many milking herds are kept indoors or in yards close to farm buildings.

This is an important time of year for farmers as early lambing continues under cover in the lowlands and calving starts under cover in some beef herds.

### Advice for dog owners

- 1. Fields where there are sheep.** Whenever possible it's best to avoid going near sheep. Dogs can cause unnecessary worry that may contribute to the premature death of sheep as well as any unborn lambs. If you need to go into a field of sheep, keep your dog on a short lead or close at heel and keep your distance from the animals. In more open country, when there are sheep around, keep your dog close at heel and keep your distance from them. This advice also applies to other farm animals.
- 2. Don't take your dog into a field where there are lambs, calves and other young animals.** Dogs can worry young farm animals and cows can be aggressive when protecting their calves. Go into a neighbouring field or onto land next to it. In more open country, for example in open country around crofting areas in north west Scotland, keep your dog on a short lead if there are lambs around, and keep your distance from them.
- 3.** Remember that a farmer has the right to shoot a dog caught worrying his livestock. Don't get your dog a bad name or risk being guilty of a criminal offence. For more information on responsible dog walking check out the Scottish Outdoor Access Code at [jessthedog.org.uk](http://jessthedog.org.uk).

## Crops

You may see ploughing and some cultivation where the land is not too wet.

Some land managers will be spraying growing crops, e.g. fertiliser on grass for silage and

winter cereals, and fungicides on some autumn crops. How long crop spraying is dangerous depends on the materials used. As these chemicals can be dangerous to public health, land managers have to reduce the risk to people who want to enter land where they have been used. Follow any advice asking you to avoid using particular routes or areas at these times.

Manure and slurry is good for soil conditioning and as fertiliser but it must be used carefully to avoid pollution.

## **Conservation**

Deer control can take place within forests all year round, often around dawn and dusk. You can help to minimise disturbance by taking extra care at these times and by following signs and notices, if deer stalking is taking place.

The season for pheasant and partridge shooting closes on 1 February. The wildfowling season below high water closes on 20 February.