



Farmland provides important breeding and foraging habitats for a range of mammals, such as Harvest Mice, Otters and Brown Hares.

Sympathetic management of hedgerows and ditches, as well as fields, can greatly improve the habitats available to mammals. Assistance for this can often be obtained through the Entry and Higher Level Stewardship schemes (ELS and HLS). Where these are not available, there is still a range of low-cost management changes available that can really help mammals.

Hedge and Ditch Management

- ELS and HLS hedgerow management options will improve hedge structure, helping to provide valuable corridors that mammals can use to move around their territories.
- Allowing corridors of tall, tussocky grassland to develop alongside hedgerows can provide vital nesting habitat for Harvest Mice, while meeting some of the criteria for the ELS hedgerow management options.
- Fencing-off watercourses from fields with grazing stock and removal of in-stream watering points will reduce potential damage to Water Vole and Otter habitat. Funding for this may be available from the Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative.
- Adopting ELS ditch management options, as well as contributing to points for an ELS scheme, can improve foraging habitat and protect breeding sites for Water Voles.
- Improving and maintaining hedgerows and ditches through ELS and HLS options can create valuable flight lines and feeding routes for a range of bat species, such as Pipistrelles, Brandt's and Natterer's.

Field Management

- Providing beetle banks, buffer strips of rough grassland and leaving field corners as grassland can provide important nesting habitat for Harvest Mice. All of these are possible options under ELS.
- Maintenance and creation of rough grassland habitats through ELS and HLS options such as management of field corners, conservation headlands and maintaining species-rich, semi-natural grasslands can provide valuable sources of food and shelter for Brown Hares.
- Cutting grasslands and crops from the centre of the field outwards will provide escape routes for any mammals feeding or sheltering within the sward / crop.



For further information please contact: