

### 3.4 Winter Feeding Sites for Swans and Geese

**Definition:** winter feeding sites for swans and geese are fields of improved grassland, winter cereals or winter oilseed rape that are regularly used for grazing, by a minimum of 25 migratory swans and/or geese per hectare, during the period October to March. Only migratory swans and geese (Whooper swans, Bewick's swans, Greenland white-fronted geese, pale-bellied Brent geese and migratory Greylag geese) can be included in the count.

**Aims:** to safeguard and enhance the suitability of wintering swan and geese feeding sites through appropriate agricultural practices.

**Biodiversity objectives:** this option will contribute to the NI Biodiversity Action Plan for the Light-bellied brent goose.

#### Management requirements

##### Improved grassland sites

- No grazing is permitted from 1 October to 31 March – there are no grazing restrictions from 1 April to 30 September.
- Sward height must be between 5 cm and 10 cm by 1 October each year.
- Pesticides cannot be applied between 1 October and 31 March.
- Slurry, farmyard manure, lime or other organic manure must not be applied between 15 September and 31 March.
- No poaching.

##### Winter cereals/oilseed rape sites

- Winter cereal or oilseed rape must be established in autumn by normal cultivation practices.
- Cultivation and sowing of winter cereals and winter oilseed rape must be completed before 1 October. In exceptional weather conditions exceptions will require the written approval of DARD.
- Pesticides (with the exception of BYDV insecticides and residual herbicides) and growth promoters must not be applied between sowing the autumn crop and 31 March.

## All sites

- Cultivations, ploughing, rolling, drainage or reseeded is not permitted between 1 October to 31 March.
- The use of bird scarers or other equipment to disturb feeding swans and geese is not permitted between 1 October and 31 March.
- New tree or hedge planting and fencing are only permitted with the written permission of DARD.

## Further advice

If grassland has suffered extensive poaching and grazing damage caused by grazing swans/geese, the damaged area may be re-seeded after 31 March.

Slug pellets may be applied to winter cereals and winter oilseed rape sites with written prior permission from DARD.

Management plans are provided for participants in the **Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Countryside Management Schemes**

