











Soil structure scorecard

| Score | Soil structure | Soil aggregates | Description | Management |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Score 1: GOOD Crumbly (aggregates readily crumble with fingers). |  |  | Good soil structure, highly porous. Small, rounded, crumb-like aggregates (<6 mm). Numerous, well-distributed roots down to spade depth. Sweet, earthy smell. | No management changes needed, continue routine monitoring. |
| Score 2: GOOD Intact (aggregates easily break apart with one hand). |  |  | Good soil structure, mostly porous. Larger rounded aggregates (2 mm to 7 cm). Numerous, well-distributed roots down to spade depth. Sweet, earthy smell. | No management changes needed. Reassess annually on grassland. Continue rotational monitoring on arable land. |
| Score 3: MODERATE Firm (most aggregates break apart with one hand). |  |  | Adequate soil structure, less visible pores. Rounded aggregates, with some angular (2 mm to 10 cm). Fewer roots distributed within soil aggregates. No noticeable smell. | Minimise traffic on wet ground. Infrastructure changes in grassland can help, e.g. back-fencing, multiple field entrances or tracks. Consider cultivation depth on arable land in autumn. |
| Score 4: POOR Compact (effort needed to break apart aggregates with one hand). |  |  | Poor soil structure, very few pores. Mostly large angular aggregates (>10 cm). Reduced rooting, clustered in large pores, earthworm channels and cracks between aggregates. Red/orange mottling may be present (sign of poor drainage). May have 'bad egg' smell. | Minimise traffic on wet ground. Check subsoil layers for compaction. Consider targeted cultivations under the right soil conditions. On grassland, consider using a sward slitter or aerator (<10 cm depth) and a sward lifter/top-soiler (10 to 30 cm depth). If the sward is poor, consider ploughing or reseedling. On arable land, consider improved drainage and diversifying crop rotations, especially the inclusion of no-till periods (e.g. ley-arable rotations). |
| Score 5: POOR Very compact (aggregates difficult to break apart with two hands). |  |  | Poor soil structure, very few pores. Very large angular or platy aggregates (>10 cm). Few roots, if any, restricted to the surface, down large pores, following earthworm channels or cracks. May be grey/blue in colour, or with orange mottling (sign of poor drainage). Strong 'bad egg' smell. | Minimise traffic on wet ground. Check subsoil layers for compaction. Consider targeted cultivations under the right soil conditions. On grassland, consider using a sward slitter or aerator (<10 cm depth) and a sward lifter/top-soiler (10 to 30 cm depth). If the sward is poor, consider ploughing or reseedling. On arable land, consider improved drainage and diversifying crop rotations, especially the inclusion of no-till periods (e.g. ley-arable rotations). |

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