



FAW Position Statement & Interim Guidance: Assessing Hard Ground & Drought Conditions

1. Duty of Care & Pitch Inspection Principle

- **Parity with Winter Postponements:** A pitch that is rock-hard or dry to the extent that it increases the risk of impact injuries (e.g., severe joint trauma, concussions, severe turf burns) must be evaluated with the same rigor as a frozen or waterlogged surface.
- **Responsibility & Authority:**
 - **Local Authority / Venue Owners:** Have primary responsibility for determining if public facilities are open and fit for play.
 - **Clubs & Match Officials:** Match officials, alongside home and away team managers, retain final authority on matchday to assess if a pitch is safe for play under Law 1 of the Game. **If a surface is deemed unsafe or poses an unreasonable risk of injury, the match or training session must not proceed.**

2. Practical Criteria for Pitch Assessments (Drought / Dry Ground)

Before training or kick-off, clubs and match officials should conduct a 4-step surface check:

1. **Stud Penetration Check:** Standard football studs/moulds must be able to penetrate the surface without excessive effort. If studs cannot break the ground surface, the pitch is too hard for safe competitive play.
2. **Fissures & Soil Cracks:** Inspect for deep cracking or uneven fissures caused by prolonged drought. Cracks present severe trip, ankle sprain, and knee ligament injury risks.
3. **Grass Cover & Friction:** Bare, dry soil or sparse dead grass significantly increases the severity of friction burns, abrasions, and impact force on falls.
4. **Foreign Objects & Compaction:** Dry conditions expose hidden stones, roots, or sharp debris previously covered by topsoil or lush grass.

3. Club Guidance & Mitigation Measures

If conditions are borderline:

- **Footwear Adaptation:** Advise players to wear appropriate footwear (e.g., molded studs, multi-stud turf boots, or astro trainers depending on the surface) rather than long metal blades or traditional studs.
- **Modify Training / Play:** Avoid high-impact drills (such as slide tackles, intensive diving for goalkeepers, or heavy contact work) during training on dry grass pitches.
- **Alternative Venues:** Where grass pitches are unplayable due to hardness, clubs are encouraged to look at accredited 3G/artificial turf facilities or postpone sessions.
- **Hydration & Heat Protocols:** Ensure the *FAW Hot Weather Guidance Framework* (including mandatory drink breaks and heat illness monitoring) is strictly followed alongside pitch checks.

Please also see a useful article from the Grounds Management Association on:

[Top Tips for Maintaining Grass Pitches in a Heatwave](#)