

How to use AutoFilter (and VAT rates)

I have found AutoFilter to be one of the most useful features of Excel, and an unexpected one, as it brings to the spreadsheet a powerful database feature with hundreds of applications in agriculture.

First open a new spreadsheet, and save it as "VAT rates"

In row 1, enter just 3 headings:

Item	VAT rate	type
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Now "all you have to do" is enter all the items you buy or sell and the VAT rate which applies.

As you will know, anything you or the stock can eat is zero rated, so you can start by entering Wheat, Barley etc and under the VAT rate column enter 0 and under type enter "zero rated"

You will find as you enter the type, that as soon as you put a "z" the spreadsheet immediately assumes you are repeating "zero rated" and fills this in for you.

Straw is an oddity here, as it is zero rated as a feed, but standard rated for bedding...officially.

Now put in a few of the Standard rated items such as fertiliser, machinery, sprays, vet fees, etc. You can add more later. Enter 17.5 in the rate column, and Standard Rate in the type column.

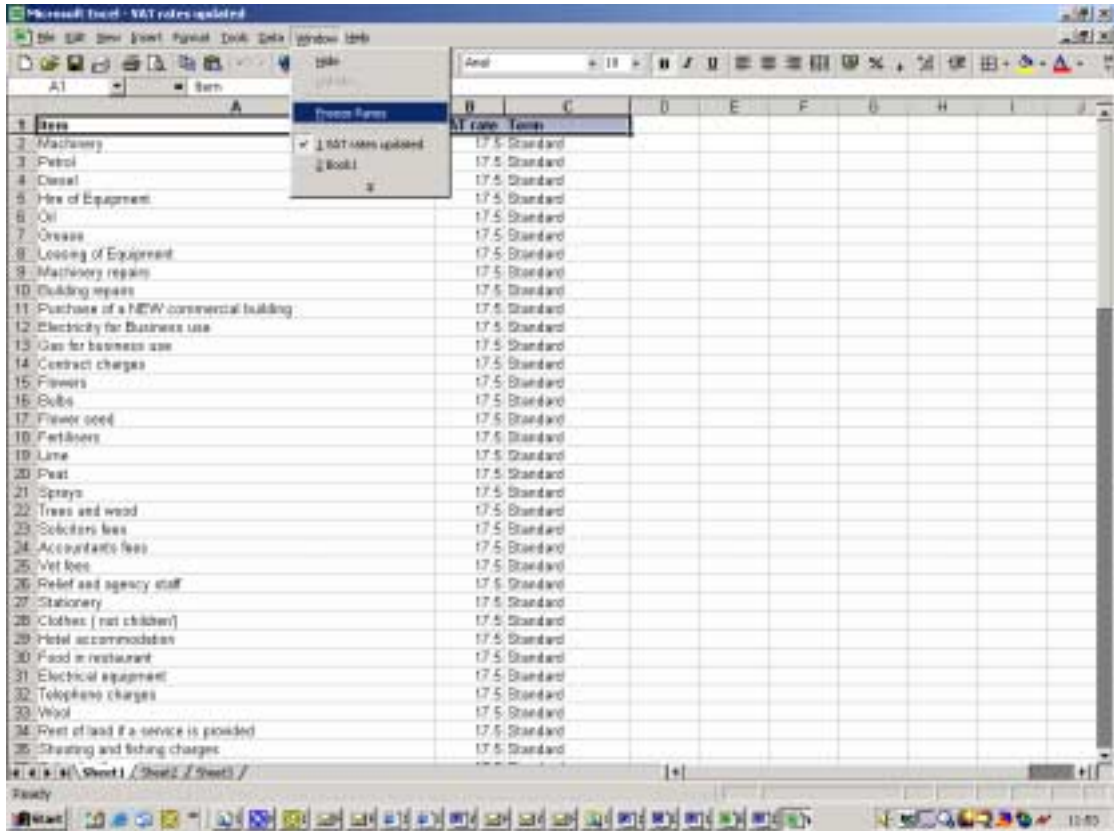
There are 3 more rates of VAT.

Reduced rate, of 5%, which is charged on such things as domestic heating fuel, insulation and women's sanitary products.

Exempt, which means it does not attract VAT at all, which includes items such as Land, Finance, Insurance, Postage, Education, and Rent of land.

Outside the Scope, which includes Wages and Pensions, Rates and taxes, levies etc. Again, no VAT is charged on these items.

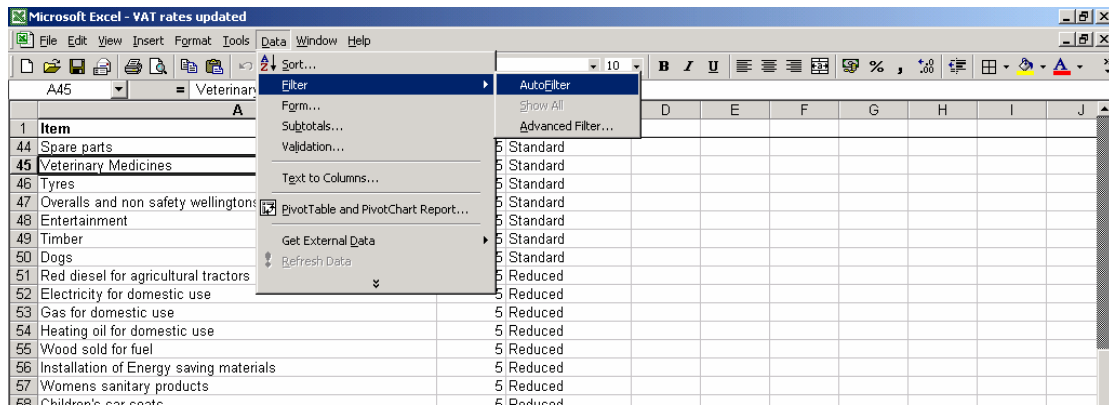
You might now find that the title row at the top of the sheet is no longer visible. You can make it stay on the screen all the time by doing this. Click in cell A2 and then click Window > Freeze Panes:



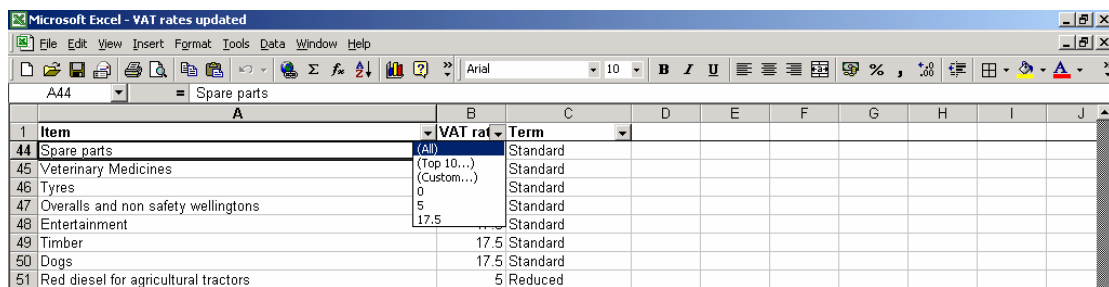
Your spreadsheet might be looking a bit like this one (you can use this to give you some ideas for your own list if you wish)

Item	VAT rate	Term
44. Spare parts	17.5	Standard
45. Veterinary Medicines	17.5	Standard
46. Tyres	17.5	Standard
47. Overalls and non safety wellingtons	17.5	Standard
48. Entertainment	17.5	Standard
49. Timber	17.5	Standard
50. Dogs	17.5	Standard
51. Red diesel for agricultural tractors	5	Reduced
52. Electricity for domestic use	5	Reduced
53. Gas for domestic use	5	Reduced
54. Heating oil for domestic use	5	Reduced
55. Wood sold for fuel	5	Reduced
56. Installation of Energy saving materials	5	Reduced
57. Womens sanitary products	5	Reduced
58. Children's car seats	5	Reduced
59. Renovation of buildings	5	Reduced
60. Grant aided installation of heating equipment	5	Reduced
61. Connection of gas supply	5	Reduced
62. Food for human consumption	0	zero
63. Food for animals for food production	0	zero
64. Purchase of new houses	0	zero
65. Public transport	0	zero
66. Books, newspapers and magazines	0	zero
67. Travel tickets	0	zero
68. Children's clothes	0	zero
69. Protective boots and helmets for industrial use	0	zero
70. Seeds for any food crop	0	zero
71. Animals for food and food consumption	0	zero
72. Water by meter	0	zero
73. Alterations/repairs to listed buildings	0	zero
74. Builders, plumbers, electricians and painters for a new house	0	zero
75. Hay	0	zero
76. Straw	0	zero
77. Silage	0	zero

Now comes the clever bit. You click anywhere in the list, and then click the Data menu at the top of the screen. From this you select Filter > AutoFilter.



You will see that little triangles have appeared next to the column headings:



By clicking on these triangles, you can see a menu which will be in numerical or alphabetical order. You can use this to show all the Outside the Scope items, or locate a particular item such as Insurance so you can quickly check whether it carries VAT.

The spreadsheet might be quite useful for the farm office, but the Autofilter idea will work with any table of information you may have on your machine, for example:

- Field Records
- Herd or flock details
- Machinery inventory
- Pesticides list
- Veterinary Products
- Employee details
- Feedstuffs list
- Bull selection lists
- Crop variety lists

Just being able to select one record from a table is only one thing you can achieve with AutoFilters.

You can search within a search, for example find all the Items containing the word "insurance" and select among these which are exempt from VAT. This feature is very useful when you have a more involved table of data. One of my students produced a table of trees, and is able to select from the whole list those trees which are native, can cope with exposed sites, high pH, and are suitable for use as hedge plants. This selection reduces the list of 130 trees down to a short list of 4 or 5 from which to choose.

Another of my students had compiled a very complete list of all the rare breed sheep on her boss's farm. She knew the breed of each ewe, and had recorded them all faithfully, in a spreadsheet several hundred lines long. She was thrilled to find she could quickly filter the list to just show the Dorset Horns, or the Manx, and her list suddenly became a vital management tool rather than just a record.

If you keep your Vet Medicine records in a spreadsheet, you could use AutoFilter to find all the times you had used Panacur, or all the times when a particular employee had administered medicines.

Notice the "Custom" option, when you look at an AutoFilter menu. This gives you a range of options such as selecting all the tractors with more than 100HP, for example.

Remember to save your work, and then open another spreadsheet which you may have completed earlier, for example a field record one, and try to apply the AutoFilter to it. Any table of information can be sorted in this way.

Always remember to click somewhere inside the table before pressing Data > Filter > AutoFilter.