

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group
Information Communications Branch



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Our reference: DAERA/26-224

Via email:

VSAHG Information Communications Branch
1st Floor
Jubilee House
111 Ballykelly Road
Limavady
BT49 9HP

Email: vsinfocommsbranch@daera-ni.gov.uk

30 April 2026

Dear

Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)

Thank you for your email received by the Department on 30 March 2026, which you sought the information in bold below. As stated in the acknowledgement letter issued on 30 March 2026, a response was due yesterday, please accept my apologies for the delay.

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm that it holds some of the information you requested. We advised you on 30th March that this request was being processed under Freedom of Information legislation, however on consideration of the information being released the request has been processed under Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

Please provide the following information for the period 1 January 2023 to date:

- 1. Any incident reports, breach reports, non-conformance reports, containment failures, accidental releases, spills, losses, mislabelling incidents, disposal failures, or other biosecurity incidents involving bluetongue virus, bluetongue samples, or bluetongue-infected material at any AFBI or DAERA laboratory or facility in Northern Ireland.**

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.

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We invest in people Standard

No information held.

2. **Any internal investigation reports, audits, reviews, or corrective action records relating to such incidents.**

No Information held

3. **Any correspondence, emails, briefings, submissions, or meeting minutes discussing the possibility that any confirmed or suspected bluetongue case in Northern Ireland may have arisen from a laboratory source, sample handling issue, containment breach, or any other government facility.**

No information held

4. **Any communications between AFBI, DAERA, the Chief Veterinary Officer, the UK Government, or any other public authority concerning whether a laboratory origin was considered, investigated, ruled out, or remained possible in relation to bluetongue in Northern Ireland.**

No information held.

5. **Any risk assessments, biosecurity protocols, inspection records, or compliance reports relating to the storage, handling, testing, transport, or disposal of bluetongue virus or bluetongue-positive samples at any AFBI or DAERA site in Northern Ireland.**

Please see attached **Annex A** and **Annex B**. The Department has considered this data and has decided to invoke several Environmental Information Regulations exceptions.

In respect of the data requested in relation to question 5, some information will be withheld under EIR Regulations 12(3) – Personal information, EIR Regulation 12(4)(e) - Disclosure of Internal Communications, EIR Regulation 12(5)(a) – Adversely affects National Security and Public Safety and EIR Regulation 12(5)(e) - Adversely affect the Confidentiality of Commercial or Industrial Information.

Please see related **Annex C** Public Interest Test in respect of Regulation 12(4)(e), EIR Regulation 12(5)(a) and EIR Regulation 12(5)(e) and **Annex D** Lawful Processing and Fairness Test in respect of Regulation 12(3).

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If you require any clarification, believe that any part of your request has been overlooked, misunderstood or misinterpreted, please contact me in the first instance to see if it is a matter that can be resolved.

If you are unhappy with the way your request for information has been handled or the decision to release/withhold information, you have the right to request a formal review by the Department. If you wish to do so, please contact The Review Section either by e-mailing daera.informationmanager@daera-ni.gov.uk or by post at The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Data Protection & Information Management Branch, Floor 2, Jubilee House, 111 Ballykelly Road, Ballykelly, Limavady BT49 9HP, within two months from the date of this letter.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner at Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, CHESHIRE, SK9 5AF, who will undertake an independent review of the Department's decision.

Yours sincerely,

