

Reference Number: DAERA/26-365
Request Details:
To provide details on the increased surveillance/testing zone in the Toome & Magherafelt areas during 2019-2020.



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

**Veterinary Service Animal Health
Group**
Information Communications Branch

[REDACTED]

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18 June 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information Act 2000

With regard to your request for information received by the Department on 01 June 2026 which sought the following information:

My request concerns the establishment, implementation, and outcomes of the specific Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) increased surveillance/testing zone established in the Toome and Magherafelt areas following or during the completion of the A6 Randalstown to Castledawson dualling/bypass infrastructure scheme (specifically spanning the timeframe of 2019 through the early 2020s).

Specifically, I request the following information:

1. Rationale and Implementation Criteria:

Any documentation, meeting minutes, risk assessments, or veterinary reports detailing the exact reasons why this specific increased bTB testing/surveillance zone was implemented.

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2. Clarification on whether the physical construction, land disruption, or wildlife displacement associated with the A6 bypass project was considered a contributing risk factor in the decision to establish this zone.

3. Geographical Scope:

The precise geographical boundaries of this surveillance zone. Please provide this in the form of a map, a list of affected townlands, or the specific criteria used to define the zone's perimeter (e.g., distance from the A6 corridor).

4. Testing Protocols and Mandates:

Details on the exact testing mandates placed on herd keepers within this zone during the 2019–2020s period (e.g., implementation of contiguous testing, increased frequency of skin testing, or mandatory Interferon Gamma blood testing).

5. Summary of Results and Data:

Statistical summaries or reports compiled on the results of the increased surveillance within this specific zone. This should include:

- a. The number of herds tested within the zone.**
- b. The number of new herd breakdowns (incidence) detected during the heightened surveillance period.**
- c. The total number of reactor animals identified and slaughtered.**
- d. Any data or findings regarding bTB strain typing (genotyping) or wildlife (badger) infection levels monitored in this specific area during the timeline.**

6. Current Status and Strategic Outcomes:

Documentation showing the current status of this specific zone (i.e., whether it remains active or has been stood down) and any "lessons learned" or conclusions drawn by DAERA regarding the impact of major road infrastructure projects on regional bTB breakdown patterns.

If the decision was taken to hold some of this information at a regional veterinary office level (such as the Coleraine or Mallusk DVO areas which interface with this geography), please ensure those records are included in the search.

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm that it holds some, but not all the information you requested.

As explained in the information sheet enclosed with my acknowledgement letter, under certain conditions, the Department has the right to refuse to respond to a request for information. In this instance, under Section 12(1) of the FOI Act the

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Department is not obliged to comply with your request for information as the estimated cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit of £600.

The Department has identified that there are approximately 290 records that may fall within the scope of your request. The work required to collate all the information you have requested will greatly exceed the appropriate limit (24 hours) of staff time as some of this information will require analysis of data which has not previously been done.

A breakdown of the estimated costs is provided:

Potential records falling within scope	Potential number of hours to review	Total estimated cost. Hours X £25/hr
290	36	£900

Under Section 16 of the FOI Act 2000, the Department has a duty to provide advice and assistance to enable you to refine your request to reduce the cost of compliance to within the appropriate limit of £600. To that end, I should be grateful if you would refine your requests to questions 1,2,3,4,5a and 6.

Even if your request is narrowed, some of the requested information may still not be able to be released to you, for example if it is considered exempt under any provision of the Act such as commercially sensitive information or third-party personal data.

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 manner in which 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.

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Yours sincerely,
VSAHG Information Communications Branch

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