

Reference Number : DAERA/26-383



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

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department of

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group
Information Communication Branch

Via Email:

[@gmail.com](#)

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

Email: vsinfocommsbranch@daera-ni.gov.uk

26 June 2026

Dear

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Thank you for your email received by the Department on 29 May 2026 which you sought the information in bold below.

I can advise that the Department has completed its search and can confirm it holds some of the information you requested.

2. June Forum. I would welcome, after the June meeting, written confirmation of what was discussed and concluded in respect of this case. A copy of the Forum's Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding, together with recent agendas and minutes of the Forum and of the biannual Equine Stakeholder Group, would also be useful. (I understand some Forum minutes have been disclosed under FOI but are not routinely published.)

The Department has decided not to disclose some of the information as it is being withheld under the following exemption of the Freedom of Information Act: Section 40(2) – Third party personal data of which you are not the data subject.

In these instances, the Department is required to consider if disclosure would breach the first Data Protection Principle, which states that processing must be lawful, fair and transparent.

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.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Standard

The Department has considered this element within the test attached at **Annex A** and has determined that no lawful basis for disclosure under FOI exists. Please bear in mind that any disclosure must be considered in terms of disclosure to the “world at large” and not just to you, the requestor. Consequently, third party personal data falling within the scope of this request has been withheld.

In addition, the Department has decided not to disclose some of the information you requested as it considers Sections 31(1)(a) of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act – Investigations and prejudice to law enforcement and Section 38 – Endangering Health and Safety of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act. In these instances, the Department is legislatively required to consider the public interest in disclosure. An associated Public Interest Test has been conducted and is attached for your information at **Annex B**.

The information that can be released is attached at **Annexes C to L**.

3. DAERA records — 2024 contacts and the 19 March 2026 submission. Your letter (point 8) states that the Equine Traceability Branch “was not aware of the February 2024 horses” until receipt of my complaint. Two factual points are worth raising:

a. DAERA was contacted by telephone in respect of this site on 9 February 2024 and again on 13 February 2024. On the first call, DAERA’s response was that the matter was a Council responsibility and should be raised with Mid Ulster District Council. Please confirm what records the local Dungannon office holds in respect of these calls.

4. The 19 June 2023 episode. Mid Ulster District Council’s Stage 1 reply of 14 May 2026 disclosed to me, for the first time, that the Council holds a record dated on or around 19 June 2023 of alleged concerns about three donkeys and a ram at this same field. Your letter does not address this episode. Could you confirm:

- a. whether DAERA was aware of it at the time or subsequently;***
- b. whether DAERA holds, or has sought, any records relating to those animals; and***
- c. whether the ram, as a farmed animal falling within DAERA’s direct welfare remit, was assessed by anyone under that remit.***

I can advise that the Department holds no information for parts 3, 4a, b and c.

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 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.

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,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the sender.A black rectangular box redacting the name of the sender.

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group

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.