

DDO Questions & Answers about Online Herd Registers

1 Will there be guidance for keepers?

- a. DAERA will publish guidance for keepers in February 2016, which will provide you with details on how to keep an online herd register. When you are confident that you will be able to comply with the guidance conditions you can start to use the derogation by stopping making entries in your on-farm herd register.

2 Why is it being introduced now?

- a. Under Article 7 of the amended EU Regulation 1760/2000 cattle keepers can use the NIFAIS database as their herd register.
- b. DAERA wants to allow keepers to keep a register online as it will be of benefit to them in reducing recording burden.
- c. We couldn't advise keepers to use it before now as it was important that the system is included in the cross-compliance verifiable standards. These standards will be updated from 1 January 2016 and all area based payment claimants will receive a letter in December informing them of the changes.

3 When can I start keeping an online herd register and do I have to tell DAERA?

- a. Use is entirely voluntary – you can start to keep your register online at any point, provided you have access to NIFAIS, are confident that you can record events electronically and ensure that NIFAIS is accurate.
- b. You do not need to tell DAERA that you are stopping keeping an on-farm register. However, you do need DAERA authorisation to access NIFAIS Online (NOL). If you use an agent to access NOL on your behalf you will need to formally authorise them to do so and inform DAERA of this. Forms are available for this purpose.

4 How can I minimise the risk of making mistakes at the outset?

- a. When you first start to record your herd information on NOL, you can continue to maintain your on-farm herd register. You can present the on-farm herd register if you are selected for inspection.
- b. While you can start using the online herd register at any time, we will only apply the standards required for using an NOL register once you have given us the following information at inspections, etc:

- i. you have stopped keeping an on-farm herd register,
- ii. from the date you say you started keeping your register on line .

You can therefore gain experience of recording information on NOL, and make sure that you are able to record information with confidence, before you use NOL as your online herd register.

5 I'm new to NIFAIS Online (NOL). Do I need to buy farm management software to upload information to it?

- a. No, but you can continue to use any recognised software packages that you have at the moment, including for uploading information to NOL.

6 I've just paid for farm management software, which I intended to use as an on-farm herd register, but if I no longer need it, will DAERA compensate me?

- a. There is no funding available for those who bought farm management software recently; however, such software is also used for farm management purposes and may still be useful to you, for example, for dairy farmers, to record yields, and to make purchasing, culling or breeding decisions. You can continue to use any recognised software packages that you have at the moment for uploading information to NOL.

7 Why does the system have to be fully electronic?

- a. You have to record all births, death and movements directly on NIFAIS Online, or have your agent do this on your behalf, rather than sending documents to DAERA because this is required by EU legislation. It means that you are responsible for records relating to your herd on NIFAIS.
- b. Some specialist moves will continue to be recorded through your DAERA Direct office in the normal way, such as moves to or from restricted herds using an MC2L, re-identifications with a different number by MC1A, moves to or from a show, and imports. These moves at present require the involvement of DAERA staff and cannot be carried out on NIFAIS Online.

8 Why do I have to record moves on the day at the latest?

- a. NIFAIS Online has always required the intention to move to be recorded on the day of the movement at the latest, but allowed it to be recorded as far in advance of the move as you wish.

- b. The intention to move is required so that you can print a movement document for the destination keeper and they can then confirm the movement (which moves the cattle out of your herd in NIFAIS and into theirs). The printed movement document must accompany the animal(s) in transit. If DAERA receives a hand written MC2 for the movement from your herd we will assume you have stopped using the derogation.
- c. You must confirm a move off your holding to another farm (seller confirmation) within 3 days following the move; however, you can record both the intention to move, and the seller confirmation, at the same time if you do them on the day of movement.

9 Why do I not record replacement tags, although I do have to do this in the on-farm register?

- a. When you order a replacement tag for an animal, your tag supplier will record this on NIFAIS on your behalf. You do not need to record this yourself.

10 How can I edit animal details in the online register after they have been entered and saved, for example animal colours, dates of birth/death, gender and tag numbers?

- a. You cannot edit animal details once these have been entered and saved. You will need to contact your DAERA Direct office in the normal way.

11 Will I have to confirm the death of animals sent to rendering plants?

- a. Yes. To comply with notification obligations keepers will have to confirm the death although the renderer has already registered the death. Of course, if the keeper performs the registration rather than the renderer, they should have no further notification/confirmation to complete.

12 Why do I have to complete records in 3 days?

- a. The NIFAIS database must contain records that are up-to-date. This is required by EU legislation, and is important when you are keeping your register online because you won't have an on-farm record of the event. This protects the integrity of the NIFAIS database and helps to protect marketing of local cattle, beef and beef products.

13 Will DAERA check that I am using the system to maintain an on line herd register correctly?

- a. DAERA will only check that you are operating correctly (within the guidance conditions) if you are selected for cattle identification, cross-compliance or other inspection involving herd records.

- b. If you are unsure whether you are complying you should speak to your local DAERA Direct office for advice. You can also avail of the training on NIFAIS Online offered by CAFRE (further details are available in the guidance).

14 Who do I contact if there is a problem with the system or my information on the online register?

- a. Contact your local DAERA Direct Office or NOL helpdesk.

15 What happens if I want to stop using the derogation?

- a. If you want to stop keeping an online herd register, you will have to create and maintain a new on-farm herd register containing all relevant information about all of the animals on your holding at that time. Any old paper herd book that you maintained before keeping an online herd register cannot form part of the new herd register. Creating a new on-farm herd register may involve forward planning on your part, and our advice to you is not to take up the derogation unless you are reasonably sure that the change will be permanent.

16 My computer uses a dial up modem or our broadband is too slow. I would like to use NIFAIS on line for may herd register. Will you pay for an upgrade to high speed broadband?

- a. We have no legislative power to fund this expenditure.

17 If my computer breaks down how will I keep my on line register up to date?

- a. You should make alternative arrangements to continue to record information through NIFAIS Online. You can access NIFAIS Online on any computer with internet access, on mobile phones and on a range of other devices. DAERA Direct Offices and some public libraries have public access computers that you can use.
- b. In the unlikely event that you are unable to complete records on NOL because no alternative arrangements are possible, you should contact your local DAERA Direct office for advice. They will discuss with you options for reverting to paper movement documents, and for keeping a copy of all information arising during the period of the system failure and for recording this on NOL when it is available.

- c. DAERA Direct staff will make a record of this advice on the NIFAIS comments pad.

18 If my computer breaks down will I be penalised at a cross compliance inspection.

- a. If you follow advice given by your local DAERA Direct office this will be taken into consideration during any inspection.

19 If NIFAIS /NOL breaks down will we lose our online register information?

- a. No. NIFAIS /NOL has contingency plans in place to minimise any problems. Any losses should only affect data being entered at the time of a system failure or server error. In this event you should log-in later, check the details online and re-enter any missing information.

20 NIFAIS /NOL breaks down how will we process births, deaths and movements?

- a. In the unlikely event of a prolonged failure in NIFAIS or NOL, you can revert to paper movement documents, and keep a copy of all information arising during the period of the system failure and record this on NOL when it is available.

21 If NIFAIS NOL breaks down will I be penalised at a cross compliance inspection?

- a. If you keep a copy of all information arising during the period of the system failure and record this on NOL when it is available this will be taken into consideration during any inspection.

22 How will keeping a register online affect my Area-based payments through cross-compliance?

- a. If you do not have access to NIFAIS Online, or have not authorised an agent to access your herd information on NIFAIS Online, you will not be considered to be keeping an online herd register if you are selected for inspection and will be subject to cross-compliance penalties if you do not have an on-farm herd register.
- b. If you are selected for inspection and your herd details are incorrect on NIFAIS each incorrect animal will receive a Bad Herd Register status for cross-compliance purposes on NIFAIS. This is the same as the system for a keeper who presents on-farm herd register with incorrect entries at inspection and the penalty level will therefore be similar.
- c. If you keep an online herd register but have not entered births, deaths and movements within the correct time limits (as shown in the guidance), or these have been recorded on NIFAIS by DAERA because you did not record them electronically, a status for cross-compliance

purposes will be applied to the affected animals on NIFAIS if you are selected for inspection. This will have a significantly lower seriousness score than the BHR status – on the basis that NIFAIS was correct at the time of inspection, but may still contribute to your overall penalty level.

23 Will the number of cross-compliance inspections be increased by taking the derogation?

No.

24 will there be a transition period before cross-compliance penalties are enforced?

No.

25 Can I appeal a penalty for a faulty herd register received after the derogation became law?

- a. No. If you maintained an on-farm register and submitted it for inspection, DAERA will have based any penalties applied on that.

26 What about EID — wasn't that in the same legislation?

- a. We are still waiting for the EU to agree technical standards (types of tag and numbering systems). As soon as that has happened, we shall consult industry about implementation.

27 What will happen during my Northern Ireland Beef and Lamb Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) Inspection?

- a. The inspector will ask what method of on-farm herd register you keep e.g. NIFAIS Online, written herd book, approved software package etc.
- b. If the participant states "Written herd book/software package etc." then there are no changes to the current inspection format.
- c. If the participant states "NIFAIS Online" – the participant must be able to produce a current herd list from NIFAIS.
- d. If the participant cannot produce a current herd list from NIFAIS Online, then a Non-Conformance will be raised (this is consistent with the current procedure for on-farm herd registers such as written herd book/approved software package etc.). It is permissible for the NIFAIS herd list to be viewed on screen or in the format of a printed copy. If the participant is aware that they will not be able to access NIFAIS Online during the inspection e.g. if an agent maintains the NIFAIS Online herd register then it is advisable that a copy is printed the day before the inspection to avoid a Non-Conformance being raised.

28 If I make a mistake when entering information on NOL or there is an animal discrepancy found at a test or inspection what evidence can I provide to resolve the problem?

- a. Once the derogation has been taken, keepers or agents recording births, deaths and movements, need to check that the information on NIFAIS is correct and up-to-date. If not then contact DDO/NOL immediately.
- b. NIFAIS will be the official contemporaneous herd register so the keeper will not be able to provide a paper book or on farm electronic herd register and call it a “herd register” in support of any investigation, relating to any events recorded after the derogation was taken up
- c. There are other sources of evidence that can be provided for animals, including freeze brand records, AI certificates with sire details, possibly pedigree/milk recording records, market/abattoir documents and DNA sampling that may be taken into account.