

Reference Number : DAERA/26-518



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

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group
Information Communication Branch

[REDACTED]
Via Email:
[REDACTED]

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

Email: vsinfocommsbranch@daera-ni.gov.uk

25 August 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Thank you for your email received by the Department on 03 August 2026 which you sought the information in bold below.

- 1. All submissions, briefings, reports, minutes, handwritten notes, emails, messages, internal correspondence, legal advice summaries, veterinary assessments and decision records relating to the operation.**
- 2. All information provided to you or your Private Office before, during or after the operation, together with records of any decisions, approvals, instructions or concerns expressed by you.**
- 3. Confirmation of when you first became aware of the proposed operation and whether you personally approved, authorised or signed off on any part of it. Please provide all records supporting your answer.**
- 4. If you were not informed in advance, all records explaining why an operation of this scale and sensitivity proceeded without your knowledge, when you were subsequently informed and what action you then took.**

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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5. The precise legislation, statutory power, warrant, court order or other legal authority relied upon to seize, pursue and destroy these cattle, together with copies of all associated authorisations and decision records.

6. All records explaining why the entire herd was killed and why alternatives such as removal, treatment, controlled sale, rehoming or independent veterinary intervention were rejected.

7. All operational plans, veterinary instructions, animal-welfare assessments, risk assessments and post-operation reports, including records concerning the fear, distress and suffering caused to the animals.

8. All records of any investigation, internal review or accountability process undertaken since the operation, including any findings, recommendations or action taken.

I can confirm that the department has completed its searches and holds some, but not all, of the information within the scope of your request.

However, the department has decided not to disclose this information at this time, as it is exempt from disclosure under Section 22 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (Information Intended for Future Publication).

A public interest test has been carried out and is attached at **Annex A**.

As you may be aware, Minister Muir has provided a detailed summary of the actions taken by the department and the accompanying context in his Written Ministerial Statement to the Assembly on 06 August and during the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs meeting held on 10 August 2026. These publications may be of interest to you.

You can read the statement via this link: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/written-statement-northern-ireland-assembly-6-august-2026>.

Coverage of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs meeting on Monday 10 August 2026 can be viewed here: <https://niassembly.tv/committee-for-agriculture-environment-and-rural-affairs-meeting-monday-10-august-2026/>

An independent external review is being taken forward to review the action taken by the department and the terms of reference has been published on the department's website: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/terms-reference-independent-external-review>. The Minister has also committed to publishing the main findings and recommendations from the review once it has been completed.

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,



Veterinary Service Animal Health Group