

Reference Number: DAERA/26-524



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 Communication Branch

[REDACTED]

Via Email:

[REDACTED] [@mla.niassembly.
gov.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@mla.niassembly.gov.uk)

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.

We advised you on 04 August 2026 that this request was being dealt with under Environmental Information Regulations 2004, however on consideration of the information being requested, the request has been processed under Freedom of Information legislation.

I request the following information:

Operational Planning

The complete operational plan for the operation.
All risk assessments prepared before the operation.
All animal welfare assessments.
All veterinary assessments.
All health and safety assessments.
All contingency plans.

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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Any operational instructions, guidance or briefings issued to staff or contractors.

Methodology and Alternatives

Documents explaining why destruction in the field was selected as the preferred method.

Any options appraisal, comparison paper or assessment of alternative methods.

Any documents considering:

transportation of animals;

slaughterhouse use;

alternative sites;

phased removal; or

alternative destruction methods.

Any records identifying the person or persons who authorised the chosen methodology.

Public Safety and Community Impact

All documents considering:

public visibility of the operation;

proximity to homes;

neighbouring properties;

nearby roads; and

public safety risks.

Any public order assessments.

Any liaison records with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

Any requests for police assistance.

Any responses received from PSNI.

Animal Information

Records showing:

the total number of animals involved;

age profiles;

sex classifications;

identification records; and

tag details.

Veterinary records considered before the operation.

Animal health assessments considered before the operation.

Any documents identifying animals considered healthy, unhealthy or requiring welfare intervention.

Any tuberculosis (TB) testing information considered in planning the operation.

Any records discussing whether all animals required destruction.

Internal Concerns and Escalations

Any records raising concerns regarding:

animal welfare;

operational practicality;

health and safety; or

public impact.

Any escalations, objections or concerns raised by:

veterinary staff;

operational staff;

contractors; or

senior officials.

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Post-Operation Reviews

Any lessons learned review.

Any operational debrief.

Any incident reports.

Any post-operation assessments.

Any records discussing whether procedures were followed appropriately.

Any records that led to the decision to undertake any internal review and/or external review of the operation.

Ministerial Involvement

All correspondence, emails, briefing papers, submissions, speaking notes, meeting notes, text messages, WhatsApp messages, records of telephone calls and internal communications between DAERA officials, the Minister and Special Advisers relating to:

the planning of the operation;

the proposed methodology;

animal welfare considerations;

public order considerations; and

media handling.

Any records showing when the Minister and/or Special Advisers were informed of:

the proposed operation;

the planned date of the operation; and

the outcome of the operation.

Search Terms

Please search using, but not be limited to, the following terms:

Martin Beattie

Beattie

Fivemiletown

Shantonnagh

Shantonnagh Road

euthanasia

destruction

deprivation order

court order

humane slaughter team

cattle operation

This request includes information held in emails, correspondence, handwritten notes, meeting notes, briefing papers, draft documents, instant messaging platforms (including WhatsApp and Microsoft Teams), text messages and any other recorded information held by the Department.

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).

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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

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