

Reference Number : DAERA/26-532



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

Via Email:

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

Email: vsinfocommsbranch@daera-ni.gov.uk

25 August 2026

Dear

Freedom of Information Act 2000

Thank you for your email received by the Department on 05 August 2026 which you sought the information in bold below.

- 1. All communications between Mr Muir and his staff regarding the shooting of these animals.**
- 2. Details of the decision making process including details of who made the decision to have these animals shot rather than removed to an abattoir?**
- 3. Who from DAERA planned the shooting operation and supervised the operation.**
- 4. Please provide all details of planning and execution the operation including public safety, animal welfare, veterinary supervision to minimise distress and necessary cruelty, competence of the person(s) carrying out the operation, and checking that all animals were actually dead – it is reported that one cow was giving birth when shot and another that a shot calf was left alive some time after it was shot – and why steps were not taken to gralloch animals, and what was done with the carcasses.**
- 5. Detailed report about how the operation was carried out compared to the plan of the operation highlight any differences between plan and actual operation.**

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6. Detailed report of how the 'marksmen' were selected and a copy of their contract including costings for carrying out the operation.
7. Copy of the final report on this operation to the Minister.

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.

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Yours sincerely,



Veterinary Service Animal Health Group

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