

Reference Number: DAERA/26-585



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

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group
Information Communications Branch

Via Email:

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07 September 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information Act 2000

With regard to your request for information received by the Department on 07 August 2026 which sought the following information:

1. **How many animals on how many farms have been destroyed by DAERA in each of the last five years?**
2. **Why were the animals destroyed on each occasion?**
3. **How many animals were destroyed using firearms in each of the last five years?**
4. **Does DAERA have a trained marksmen on their staff?**
5. **In relation to the 51 cattle destroyed on a farm near Fivemiletown, Co. Tyrone on June 29, 2026, who made the operational decision to euthanise the animals using firearms and on site? Was it the Chief Vet? Was it Minister Muir? Was the decision made prior to the operation being undertaken?**
6. **Does the Minister need to give his agreement before such an operation is undertaken?**
7. **Was the Minister informed of the operation beforehand?**

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8. Did the DAERA officials seek or have permission to use firearms on the farm to destroy the 51 cattle on June 29?
9. How many meetings/correspondents did DAERA officials have with the PSNI prior to the incident? If there was, who was the meetings/correspondence with and when?
10. Do the marksmen that killed the 51 animals on the farm on June 29/30 have valid firearms certificate from the PSNI?
11. Was the Minister made aware of how the operation went and if so, when was he specifically told?
12. What is the estimated cost in total of the operation including disposing of the euthanised cattle and who will pay for it?

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

1. 337,512 animals on 210 farms.

The information in relation to **2-3** is attached as **Annex A**.

In line with EU reporting obligations, reasons for humane destruction are recorded under the following headings:

“Animal health” reasons relate to the killing of the animals primarily to prevent spreading the disease to other animals.

“Public Health” reasons relate to the killing of animals primarily to prevent microbiological or chemical contamination of human beings.

“Other” relate to the killing of animals for animal welfare or environmental reasons.

“Mechanical methods” (i.e. shot)

4. Yes, DAERA have trained marksmen.

However, the department has decided not to disclose the information for points **5-12**, 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 B**.

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 manner in which 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,

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

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group