

Reference Number: DAERA/26-572



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:

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

E-mail: vsinfocommsbranch@daera-ni.gov.uk

01 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:

Legal authorisation and basis for the operation

- 1. A copy of the Court Deprivation Order under which the operation was carried out, including the date it was granted and the court that issued it.**
- 2. The specific statutory powers DAERA relied on to carry out the killing of the animals, including full citation of the relevant sections of the Welfare of Animals (Northern Ireland) Act 2011 and any subordinate regulations.**
- 3. Confirmation of whether DAERA classified this operation as 'emergency killing' for the purposes of Article 2(2) of Council Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009, and if so, the date and basis on which that classification was made, and who made it.**
- 4. Confirmation of whether DAERA exercised any power under Article 18(3) of Regulation (EC) No 1099/2009 (or the equivalent provision in the**

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.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Standard

Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014) to grant itself, or the operation, an exemption from any welfare-at-killing standard that would otherwise have applied, including the name/role of the official who authorised any such exemption, and a copy of that authorisation.

- 5. Any legal advice (in summary, or the advice itself with privilege waived if DAERA chooses) obtained by DAERA regarding the method, location, or conduct of the operation prior to 29 June 2026.**

Decision-making, planning and paperwork evidencing consideration of options

- 1. All internal briefings, submissions, options papers, or advice papers prepared in the lead-up to the operation, including who authored them, who they were sent to, and the date of each.**
- 2. A complete list, with dates, of every option or alternative to killing the animals in open fields that was formally considered, together with the paperwork recording that consideration — not a summary, the actual submissions, minutes, or notes in which each option was assessed.**
- 3. For each option considered and rejected, the specific reason it was rejected, who made that decision, and on what date.**
- 4. The name and job title of the senior DAERA official who gave final authorisation for the operation to proceed as planned, and a copy of that authorisation.**
- 5. The date planning for this specific operation began, and a timeline of key planning decisions between that date and 29 June 2026.**
- 6. Copies of any risk assessments carried out in advance of the operation, covering animal welfare, staff safety, and public safety.**
- 7. Copies of any operational plan, standard operating procedure, or method statement used to guide the conduct of the operation on the day.**
- 8. Confirmation of which DAERA branch, team, or unit had overall operational responsibility for the cull.**

The farmer's and neighbours' own requests to move or spare the animals

- 1. Confirmation of whether the farmer/keeper applied to DAERA, at any point before 29 June 2026, for permission to move some or all of the animals off the farm, and if so, the date of that application and a copy of it.**
- 2. If such an application was made, the names/roles of every DAERA official who was made aware of it, and a full record of how and why it was decided not to grant it (or the outcome, if granted in part).**
- 3. Confirmation of whether any neighbouring farmer, family member, or third party contacted DAERA before 29 June 2026 offering to take some or all of the animals, and if so, the date, the substance of that contact, and DAERA's response.**
- 4. Confirmation of whether, on the day of the operation itself, any local farmer, neighbour, or member of the public approached DAERA staff or**

PSNI on site to request that some or all of the remaining animals be spared or removed rather than killed.

5. If such a request was made on the day, a full account of what happened as a result — who received the request, whether it was escalated, to whom, what consideration was given to it, who made the final decision to refuse or accept it, and how much time (if any) the operation paused while it was considered.
6. Confirmation of whether any animals were in fact removed from the cull that day as a result of any such request, and if so, how many and what happened to them afterwards.

Veterinary involvement and the written assessment on moving the cattle

1. The name(s), job title(s) and RCVS registration number(s) of the veterinary officer(s) who were professionally in charge of the operation on 29 June 2026, at each stage of the day.
2. A copy of the vet's (or vets') written assessment concluding that moving the cattle to another location or facility instead of killing them on site was not possible or not appropriate, including the date of that assessment and the specific reasons given.
3. Confirmation of whether that written assessment was made before 29 June 2026, or on the day itself, and if on the day, at what time relative to the start of the operation.
4. Any written veterinary sign-off, certification, or authorisation required before the operation proceeded, and a copy of that document.
5. Confirmation of whether a vet was continuously present and in professional charge throughout the entire duration of the operation, or whether responsibility changed hands during the day, and if so, when and to whom.

Precedent and wider practice

1. The number of similar Deprivation Order enforcement operations involving the culling or destruction of livestock carried out by DAERA in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years, and the method used, and location type (controlled facility vs open field), in each case.
2. Copies of any existing DAERA policy, guidance, or code of practice governing how such operations should be planned and carried out, current at the time of the 29 June 2026 operation.

Accountability and consequences

1. Confirmation of whether any DAERA staff member has been suspended, subject to disciplinary action, or referred to a professional regulatory body (such as the RCVS) as a result of this operation, without naming any individual if that would identify them, but confirming numbers/roles only.

2. Confirmation of whether the matter has been referred to, or raised with, the Police Service of Northern Ireland or the Public Prosecution Service, and the current status of any such referral so far as can be disclosed.

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 some of this information, as it is exempt from disclosure under Sections 22, 31 and 40 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

A public interest test and lawful fairness test have been carried out and are attached at **Annexes A and B** respectively.

The information that can be released is attached at **Annex C**.

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.A small black rectangular box redacting the name of the sender.

Veterinary Service Animal Health Group

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.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Standard