

Reference Number : DAERA/26-750



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

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Depairtment o'

**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**

**Veterinary Service Animal Health Group**

Information Communication Branch

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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

Email: [vsinfocommsbranch@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:vsinfocommsbranch@daera-ni.gov.uk)

26 October 2026

Dear [REDACTED]

**Freedom of Information Act 2000**

Thank you for your email received by the Department on 28 September 2026 which you sought the information in bold below.

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

**Copies of all current policies, operational instructions, enforcement guidance, standard operating practices, protocols, manuals, decision-making frameworks or other guidance used by DAERA and/or its Veterinary Service Animal Health Group in relation to the investigation and enforcement of animal health and welfare matters.**

**In particular, please provide any guidance which sets up:**

- **The circumstances in which enforcement action may be taken;**
- **The factors considered when determining the nature and proportionality of enforcement action;**
- **The escalation and authorisation process for enforcement interventions;**

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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- **Guidance relating to the seizure, removal, destruction and euthanasia of livestock;**
- **Requirements concerning animal welfare and the handling of livestock during enforcement operations;**
- **The respective roles and responsibilities of DAERA officials, veterinary officers, contractors, PSNI or other bodies involved in enforcement activity;**
- **Any requirements of risk assessment, operational plans or consideration of alternative courses of action before enforcement takes place; and**
- **Any internal review, oversight or approval requirements applying to significant animal health and welfare enforcement operations.**

As explained in the information sheet enclosed with my acknowledgement letter, under certain conditions, the Department has the right to refuse to respond to a request for information. In this instance, under Section 12(1) of the FOI Act the Department is not obliged to comply with your request for information as the estimated cost of compliance exceeds the appropriate limit of £600.

The Department has identified that there are approximately 788 records that may fall within the scope of your request. The work required to collate this information will greatly exceed the appropriate limit (24 hours) of staff time and will place a disproportionate burden on the Department. The estimated cost of processing the request above would be £1664.58 An explanation of how this was calculated is below:-

| Potential records falling within scope | Potential number of hours to review | Total estimated cost. Hours X £25/hr |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 788                                    | 66 hours 35 mins                    | 1,664.58                             |

Under Section 16 of the FOI Act 2000, the Department has a duty to provide advice and assistance to enable you to refine your request to reduce the cost of compliance to within the appropriate limit of £600.

Given the breadth of the information currently sought, we would suggest refining the request so that it relates only to on farm matters concerning the welfare of farmed animals.

We would suggest that:

- “investigation” is removed from the scope
- “enforcement” is limited to on farm enforcement relating to farmed animal welfare, specifically financial penalties (including any reduction or withholding of grants or subsidies claimed), referrals for prosecution and applications to the courts for additional orders, for example, disqualification from keeping animals; and

- the matters set out in the eight bullet points in the original request are removed from the scope. However, records identified as part of the refined on farm farmed animal welfare request may touch upon these matters

The request for the current version of each relevant document, together with its title, date/version number and effective date, where relevant, would remain unchanged.

Even if your request is narrowed, some of the requested information may still not be able to be released to you, for example, if it is considered exempt under any provision of the Act such as third-party personal data.

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](mailto: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**