



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

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FAS news

Farm Advisory System

newsletter

Summer 2016

Issue 05

Foreword

**Eric Long,
Head of Development Service, CAFRE**

I am pleased to introduce the fifth edition of the 'Farm Advisory System' (FAS) newsletter. This issue focuses on key advisory messages to help you realise the benefits of area-based schemes and EU support while minimising the risk of penalties.

What is FAS?

The EU requires all member states to have a Farm Advisory System (FAS) to inform farmers of their obligations in the following five areas:

1. Cross-Compliance
2. Greening and Land Eligibility
3. Rural Development Programme
4. Water Framework Directive
5. Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive

This issue contains articles on a range of FAS topics including online cattle registration, making wise use of chemical fertiliser for grass production, sprayer application equipment test requirements and manure exports.

A list of FAS training courses offered by CAFRE is provided on a reply paid postcard so please complete and return the card to find out more about the various topics.

Forthcoming Events

• CAFRE Rush Management Event

Date: Tuesday 5th July 2016 at 2pm.

Venue: Meet at Killeter Heritage Centre, Woodside Road, Castleterg, Co Tyrone.

• CAFRE Dry Stone Walling Courses

Dates: Friday 26th August 2016 at 10.00am.
Friday 16th September 2016 at 10.00am.

Venue: Greenmount Hill Farm, 62C Glenhead Road, Glenwherry.

• CAFRE Rush Management Event

Date: Thursday 22nd September 2016.

Session 1 commencing at 2pm;

Session 2 commencing at 5pm.

Venue: Crom Estate, Newtownbutler, Co Fermanagh.

To book your place on any of these courses please visit www.cafre.ac.uk/industry-support/



How to Maintain your Herd Register on APHIS

David Cassells, Veterinary Service Animal Health Group

DAERA now offers cattle farmers the option of maintaining their herd register on APHIS instead of using an on-farm electronic or paper herd book. The user must comply with certain conditions and these have been set out in detail below.



Detailed guidance is on the DAERA website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/online-herd-register-guidance-cattle which sets out the conditions for taking advantage of this new facility. A list of commonly asked questions is also available via this link.

The main conditions are:

- 1. Access** - you need to have access to APHIS Online.
- 2. Accuracy** - you must take responsibility for the accuracy of your herd information recorded on APHIS.
- 3. Electronically** - you must record all of your births, deaths and movements electronically, using APHIS Online, rather than sending notification documents to DAERA.
- 4. Timing** - you must record births within 23 days, your intention to move animals off your farm on the day of movement, and all other events within 3 days of each event.

Maintaining a Herd Register

Although keeping a herd register (either paper herd book, electronic herd book or APHIS Online) and retaining a record for 10 years are legal requirements, choosing to maintain your herd register on APHIS is entirely voluntary. Farmers can use APHIS Online to access their herd information and record births, deaths and movements and at the same time continue to use an on-farm electronic or paper herd register.

At Inspection

Herd register checks are included as part of Cross-Compliance inspections and will be examined if your business is selected for inspection.

At the beginning of the inspection we will ask whether you are maintaining your herd register on APHIS. If you are, you will be asked to confirm from what date you started to do so. We may also examine your previous on-farm paper/electronic herd register for the period before you started maintaining your herd register on APHIS.

If you start to maintain your herd register on APHIS, but then change your mind, you may revert to the paper/electronic register option. However, if you do this you will have to open a new register and record in it the details of all animals in your herd at that date and all the details of events (births, deaths and movements) occurring after that date.

To avoid financial penalties, please read the guidance carefully before you start maintaining your herd register on APHIS. Please pay particular attention to the conditions with which you must comply.

Further help:

If you have any technical issues, please refer to the online herd register guidance on the DAERA website or, alternatively, contact the DAERA Online Services Helpdesk on 028 9442 6699 (Mon–Fri 9am to 5pm) or e-mail onlineservices@daera-ni.gov.uk.

We have published a range of videos on the DAERA website about registering for and using APHIS Online which includes the use of AOL as the herd register.

Farm Nutrient Calculators – What’s in it for you?

Gráinne McCarney, Crops, Horticulture and Sustainability Branch, CAFRE

The five farm nutrient calculators shown below can help you:

- Comply with the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) nutrient limits; nitrogen loading, slurry storage capacity, nitrogen and phosphorus applied to crops; phosphorus balance (derogated farms);
- Make complex calculations and keeping records easier;
- Improve soil fertility and crop yields;
- Make potential savings on chemical fertiliser;
- Improve water quality.

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DAERA Online Services

ONLINE SERVICES HOME > CAFRE NUTRIENT CALCULATORS

Farm nutrient calculators

There are five farm nutrient calculators which will help you with the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) measures on nutrient limits, manure storage requirements and record keeping.

- Nitrogen loading calculator**
Check if you are below the 170kg N/ha/year limit or if operating under a derogation the 250kg N/ha/year limit
- N Max for grassland calculator**
Check that nitrogen applications to the whole grassland area on the farm do not exceed the NAP limits
- Crop nutrient calculator**
Helps you to comply with nutrient limit requirements and draw up a nutrient management plan (NMP) for your farm
- Phosphorus balance calculator**
Calculate the P balance for your farm and help manage P inputs and outputs to meet the limit
- Manure storage calculator**
Calculate the weekly slurry, dirty water, manure production and current storage capacity for your farm

You can go online and use the Farm Nutrient Calculators at any time.

Get Online Today!

To date over 3,500 farmers have used the farm nutrient calculators. If you would like to start using the calculators, register today at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/online-services.

Training Available

CAFRE offer training courses to help farmers understand the NAP requirement, nutrient management planning and using the calculators. To register your interest on this or any of our courses you can either:

- go online www.cafre.ac.uk/agri-environment-topics/
- complete the enclosed prepaid postcard or
- contact CAFRE by calling 028 9442 6880.

Bracken Control Update and Information Events

Graeme D Campbell, Crops, Horticulture and Sustainability Branch, CAFRE

Bracken is found throughout Northern Ireland on a wide range of habitats. It survives on highly acidic soils, deep loams and sandy soils and is tolerant of a wide range of climates. It is very invasive and can damage many priority habitats by smothering and blocking light and moisture from other plants. If not controlled bracken spreads very rapidly using a network of thick, fleshy underground stems. Fronds grow from the stems and become visible from mid May onwards growing up to 1.5m in height. Bracken produces spores which may be carcinogenic and its leaves can be poisonous to livestock if eaten, although livestock normally tend to avoid consuming bracken.

Land with bracken cover is **not** eligible for Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). The area of bracken must be deducted from the total field area even where bracken is present in only part of a field for 2 or 3 months of the year as the BPS rules state that land must be eligible for the **entire calendar year**. For further information please refer to the '2016 Guide to Eligibility Booklet' www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dard/guide-to-land-eligibility-2016.pdf

CAFRE KTT Bracken Control Project Update

CAFRE established six bracken project sites across Northern Ireland in 2014. To demonstrate different bracken control methods and to establish which methods are most effective under local conditions. Rolling, cutting and spraying has taken place on each of the sites. There is also a control area on each site.

Asulam was applied in 2014 and initial findings show that this was a very successful method of control with a **95% reduction in 2015**.



Rolling taking place in July 2015.



CAFRE Bracken Control Demonstration Plot in Garvagh. Photograph taken in July 2014.



CAFRE Bracken Control Demonstration Plot in Garvagh. Photograph taken in July 2015 one year after treatments commenced.

Rolling is also an effective method of control. Rolling took place once in 2014 and twice in 2015. Initial findings are showing that rolling must take place at least twice in the bracken growing season to be successful. Rolling damages the stems reducing food energy supply for bud development the following year. Indications are that rolling must be carried out each year to reduce bracken infestation. Growth in 2016 will determine if rolling twice in 2015 was worthwhile.

Cutting with a flail mower has also taken place on the CAFRE demonstration sites. Initial findings indicate that cutting must take place early in the growing season to allow for sufficient regrowth to be cut again as cutting just once in the growing season will not eradicate bracken.

2016 Chemical Control Update

Products containing the active ingredient Asulam, such as Asulox have commonly been used to control bracken. However, from 31st December 2012 it became illegal to sell, transfer, promote or use Asulam products. It is hoped that the re-registration of Asulam Products can be completed by 2018. In the meantime, an Emergency Authorisation for Asulam products has been granted and will allow the application of the product Asulox to control bracken in the UK during the specified period in 2016. This will be reviewed annually.

The important dates to remember if considering applying Asulam in 2016 are:

- **16 May 2016:** Start Date for Emergency Authorisation for 120 days;
- **1 July 2016:** Application of Asulam products can commence;
- **12 September 2016:** First expiry date for sale and distribution of stocks. Application can continue;
- **31 October 2016:** Final expiry date for disposal, storage and use of Asulam. It will be illegal to apply or store Asulam products after this date.

Bracken can be controlled by the application of Asulam products using either manual knapsack sprayer or tractor/quad boom sprayer. Follow up treatment in subsequent years is essential for full control.

If you would like further information in relation to the 2016 Emergency Authorisation please visit www.brackencontrol.co.uk

Safety

It is important to remember that bracken is often found on steep areas of land. Please take extreme care when operating machinery on sloping land to protect your health and safety. If the area is too steep consider your options and if unsure it may be best to leave alone.

CAFRE Bracken Control Demonstration Site Visits 2016

CAFRE are planning to hold two information evenings in early summer 2016 to discuss bracken control methods and to discuss land eligibility matters in relation to bracken. There will be an opportunity to visit two Bracken Control Demonstration Sites at the following locations:

Site 1: Churchtown Road, Garvagh, Co Derry/Londonderry – Meeting at Northern Counties Co-Op Swatragh;

Site 2: Murlough Nature Reserve, Dundrum, Newcastle, Co Down.

If you would like to attend any of the above information evenings for bracken control please complete the expression of interest form at www.cafre.ac.uk/industry-support/industry-training/agri-environment-topics/bracken-control or tick the appropriate box on the prepaid postcard attached.

For any further queries in relation to bracken control please contact Graeme Campbell 028 9442 6641 or E-mail graeme.campbell@daera-ni.gov.uk

Cross-Compliance Farm Animal Welfare Inspections The 3 Most Common Animal Welfare Breaches

Paddy McGuckian, Divisional Veterinary Officer, Animal Welfare & Zoonoses Branch

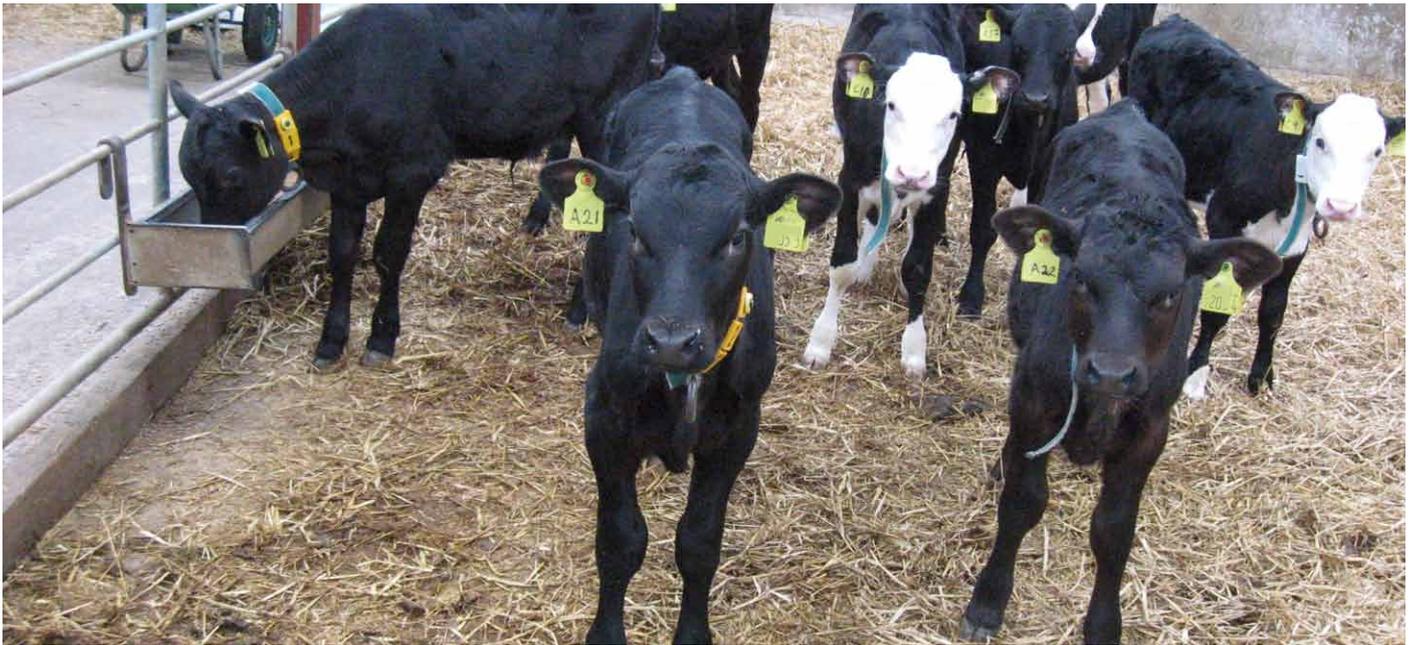
This article highlights the most common farm animal welfare breaches detected on NI farms from Cross-Compliance inspections in 2015.

Under EU Cross-Compliance regulations Veterinary Service Animal Health Group must inspect 1% of eligible businesses for the three Statutory Management Requirements (SMR) covering animal welfare. In addition, veterinary inspectors also carry out welfare inspections in response to complaints received.

During 2015 veterinary inspectors carried out a total of 666 farm animal welfare inspections. Under SMR 13 “Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes” the most commonly breached verifiable standards were the following:

1. Inspection

‘If any of your animals appear ill or injured you must care for them immediately. If they do not respond to this care, you must get veterinary advice as soon as possible. If necessary you must isolate sick or injured animals in suitable accommodation with dry, comfortable bedding’.



2. Staffing

'You must make sure that your animals are cared for by enough staff who have the appropriate ability, knowledge and professional skills'.

3. Feed, Water and Other Substances

'You must feed your animals a wholesome diet which is appropriate to their age and species. They must receive enough food to keep them healthy, meet their nutritional needs and promote a positive state of well-being'.

It is important to realise that the vast majority of inspections fully complied with animal welfare requirements. A very small number of farmers, however, repeatedly fail to meet the basic needs of their animals for example for food, shelter and veterinary care.

Further Information on Cross-Compliance

Farmers who are in receipt of EU Area Based Scheme Payments including Basic Payment Scheme must comply with all relevant rules relating to the Cross-Compliance Statutory Management Requirements (SMR). Failure to comply will result in penalties being applied to any agriculture support payments that you receive.

Penalties for animal welfare breaches range from 1% to 5% for those due to negligence and from 15% to 100% for intentional breaches. The penalty applied depends on:

- i) the severity of a breach,
- ii) whether the affect of the breach was limited to the farm on which it occurred or if it affected others, and
- iii) whether or not the breach can be rectified.

Full details of the Northern Ireland Cross-Compliance verifiable standards are available on the DARD website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/what-cross-compliance. In addition, the Northern Ireland Codes of Practice for the Welfare of Livestock set out the minimum standards of care required and are based on good practice and scientific knowledge. A copy of these can be downloaded from DAERA website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/codes-practice-farmed-animals

Don't forget to Notify Cattle Deaths

Graham Fallows, Veterinary Service, Animal Health Group

EU and local legislation requires cattle herd keepers to notify (confirm) the death of all cattle to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural affairs (DAERA) within 7 days of the animal's death.

Farmers should remember that when cattle carcasses are sent to a renderer, incinerator, hunt kennel or veterinary laboratory that the confirmation of death must still be done by the herdkeeper as described below.

None of these businesses can make the required notification/confirmation on your behalf!

This notification/confirmation of death is best done electronically if you are registered to use APHIS-on-Line or by completing a paper MC1 (Notification of Births and Deaths of Bovine Animals) document and delivering or sending it to your local DAERA office.



Failure to notify DAERA within 7 days may affect any Area Based Scheme payments which are claimed by you, including Basic Payment Scheme payments.

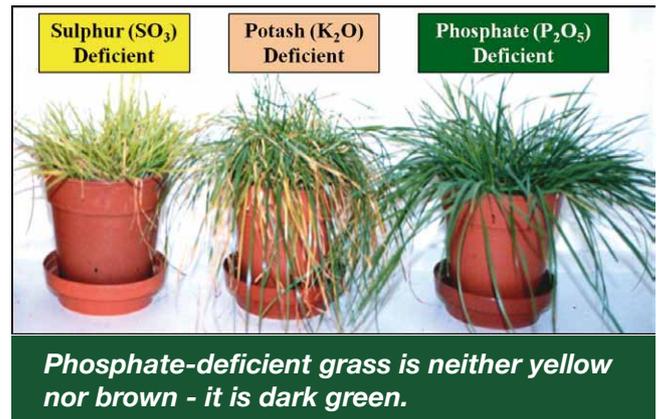
If selected for a cross compliance inspection or a cattle identification inspection (CII), an administrative check will be carried out to determine if the notifications required (including confirmation of cattle deaths) have been made within the required time scales.

For more information please contact your local DAERA office. To register to use APHIS online go to www.deara-ni.gov.uk/onlineservices, text **Easy** to 67300 or telephone the DEARA online services helpdesk on 028 9442 6699.

Make Wise Use of Chemical Fertiliser for Grass Production - Latest Findings from AFBI

Dr John Bailey, Agri Food and Bio-sciences Institute

Don't apply phosphate (P_2O_5) fertiliser if you don't need it!



Chemical fertilisers and manures need to be applied to grow swards for cutting or grazing. Unfortunately, very few grassland farmers soil-test, and therefore most are completely 'in the dark' regarding the nutrient status of their soils. Consequently, on many farms expensive NPK compound fertilisers are being applied routinely to grassland, regardless of whether or not phosphate is needed. In other situations, expensive compound fertilisers are being targeted at under-performing fields in the mistaken belief that these are suffering from phosphate deficiency.

It is highly unlikely that under-performing silage swards are being curtailed by phosphate deficiency. Provided phosphate in slurry is being recycled back to cutting land, there ought to be more than enough in both soil and manure to meet crop requirements without the need for additional fertiliser phosphate.

Yellow grass does NOT indicate phosphate (P_2O_5) deficiency!

If adequate nitrogen (N) is being applied to swards, under-performance could be due to sulphur (SO_3) or even potash (K_2O) deficiency. Farmers often assume that yellowing of swards is symptomatic of phosphate deficiency, when in fact it is almost certainly the result of sulphur deficiency. Swards acutely deficient in sulphur are pale green to yellow; potash deficient swards have distinctive 'brown paper' discoloration of older leaves, whereas phosphate deficient swards are DARK GREEN – not yellow.

In the past, sulphur deficiency was primarily confined to sandy soils, and typically occurred during summer. Today, however, it is widespread on both sandy and clay textured soils, and is now most prevalent in spring. Consequently, **AFBI recommends applying between 25 and 35 kg SO_3 /ha, routinely, as sulphur-containing fertiliser (NS or NKS) to ALL silage swards in SPRING, even to those where slurry has been applied.**

Protect your industry!

Over-use of phosphate-containing fertilisers is one of the main reasons why Northern Ireland Agriculture is currently being regulated under the European Union's Nitrates Directive. Although use of phosphate fertilisers declined dramatically from 2000, in the last 3 years it has increased again, and there is now a risk that water quality could deteriorate once more and jeopardise Northern Ireland's Nitrates Action Programme and derogation.

To protect the farming industry and the environment, and prevent further regulation from Brussels, farmers must manage nutrient inputs wisely and responsibly, and only use phosphate-containing fertilisers when there is definitely a phosphate requirement that cannot be met using organic manure.

River Catchments – you may be more connected than you think!

Alan Morrow, Countryside Management Delivery Branch

The quality of water in the environment is something that affects us all. Freshwater is one of our most important natural resources for drinking, farming, commerce, leisure and biodiversity. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) was introduced by the European Union and is designed to promote the improvement of water quality in the environment to 'good status' across the whole European Community.

Important landscape features

Northern Ireland has three River Basin Districts, the Neagh Bann, North Western and North Eastern. Each contains numerous smaller rivers, streams and drains which criss-cross farmland. These waterways make a significant contribution to biodiversity and form an important part of our landscape which contributes to the wholesome image of the countryside often portrayed when marketing NI produce.

Connectivity

For those farmers with rivers and streams flowing through their land, the concept of river catchment management is an easy one to grasp. On these farms the need for care and attention to detail when carrying out activities such as slurry spreading and farmyard pollution control are very obvious to avoid damaging the waterway. For those without such an obvious connection to a waterway, the relevance of catchment management may often appear less important. However, this is a mistake as all land is within a river catchment and poor nutrient and farmyard management may ultimately have an undesirable effect on that river.

Take care with field drains

Connectivity to a waterway may be influenced by a number of factors, including those naturally occurring such as slope and soil type. One other factor which must not be overlooked is that of field drainage. Field drainage has been a feature of our agriculture system for generations. This enables farmers to minimise farmland flooding and can improve productivity by providing a suitable root zone for grass and other crops free from water logging. However, it can also raise the risk of pollution from the drained field if precautions are not taken. This can happen when manure and fertiliser nutrients are applied to the field during inappropriate field or weather conditions.

Good nutrient management is essential

Conditions laid down in the Nitrates Action Programme 2015 – 2018 and Phosphorus Regulations have been designed to protect water against pollution from farm nutrients. These are consistent with good catchment management and must be complied with. Risk may be further reduced by not applying farm nutrients to:

- land which has been pipe drained or mole drained within the last 12 months;
- land when field drains are running;
- land where soil cracking goes down to the field drain or backfill or
- compacted ground.

Farmyard pollution control

Great care must be taken with storm water drainage in the vicinity of the farmyard as this is a direct route to a waterway. It should be designed to ensure that roof water and clean water discharges to the waterway are free from any contamination by slurry, silage effluent or dirty water. Even where this is the case, don't forget to take account of seasonal activities within the farmyard as this may mean collecting run-off is necessary from what are usually 'clean yard' areas. It is good practice to regularly monitor storm water outfalls leaving your yard, drains and other watercourses on the farm ensuring that they remain totally free from pollution.

Find out more about your river catchment

One of the quickest ways to find out more about the river catchment that you are farming in is to visit the following website <http://maps.ehsni.gov.uk/wmuviewerplan2/>

From this interactive map you will be able to identify your river catchment and discover its current WFD status along with reasons for the classification. In addition to its current status, you will see the target for 2021 and 2027. The map also demonstrates, with its interconnecting waterways, just how river catchment management is important for all farmers not just those with a visible waterway on their farm.



Good nutrient management is essential to meet the Water Framework Directive target of "Good" Status.

Water Framework Directive and the Impact of Surplus Phosphorus

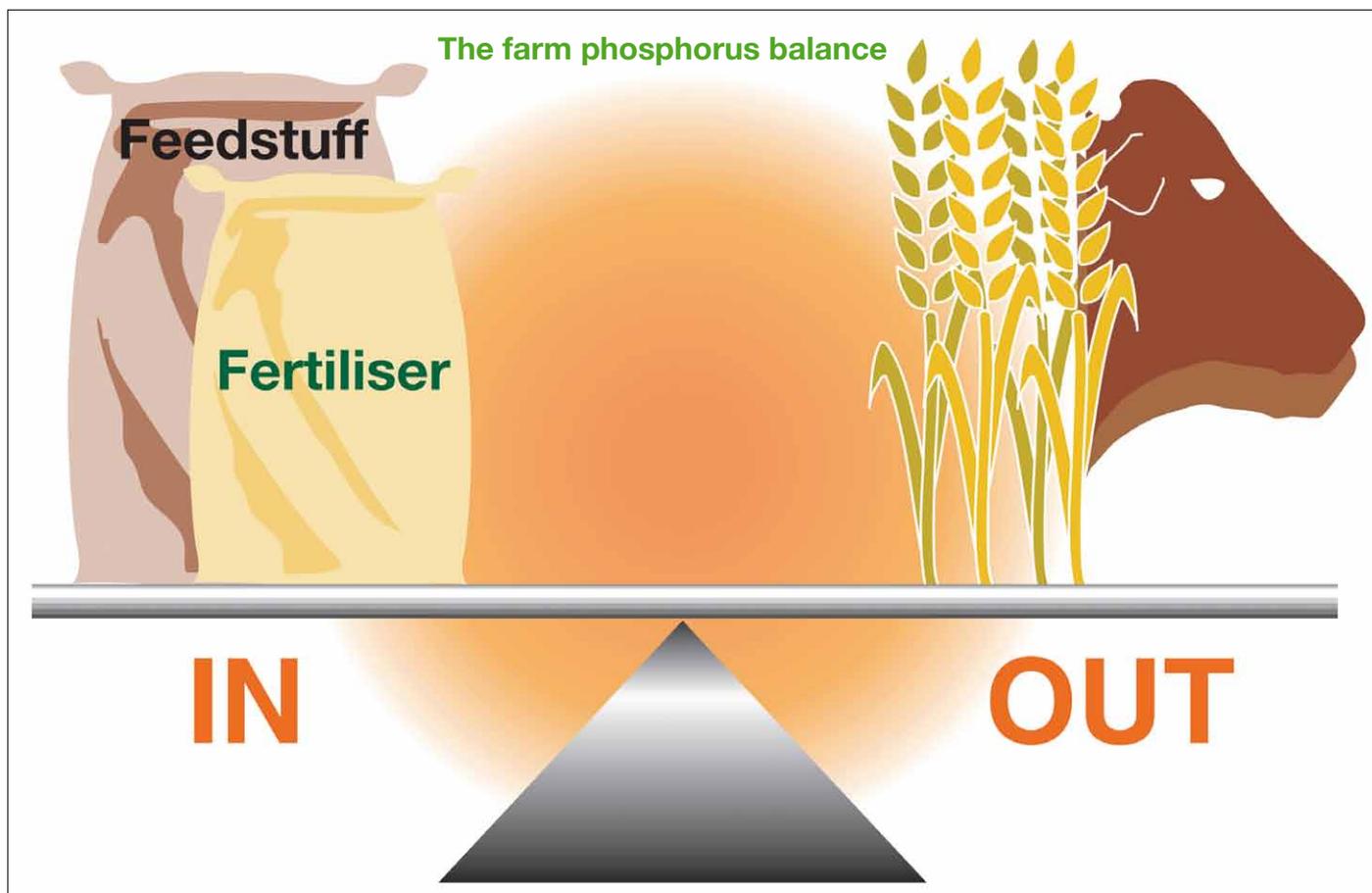
Siobhan Bowers, Environmental Farming Branch

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) requires us to achieve “good” status of our water bodies and prevent deterioration of water quality. 37% of Northern Ireland water bodies are currently at “good” status, with a target of up to 70% by 2021.

Diffuse agricultural pollution is the main problem, causing almost 40% of river water bodies to fail. This is primarily due to high levels of phosphorus in the water, leading to excessive algae and aquatic plant growth, which is called eutrophication. This process can lead to critically low levels of oxygen in the water, with the potential for fish kills. Phosphorus may enter rivers and lakes directly through run off and sub surface flow, or indirectly, when attached to silt and sediment through soil erosion. Therefore, action to tackle phosphorus pollution is essential to meet WFD targets.

Farm Phosphorus Balance

Phosphorus is an important nutrient for the productivity of grass, crops and farm animals. Phosphorus is brought onto the farm in the form of inorganic fertiliser, feeds, imported manures and purchased livestock. However, only a proportion of this phosphorus leaves the farm in the form of milk and meat. There is usually more phosphorus coming onto the farm, than leaving it in the form of livestock produce. The difference between phosphorus entering and leaving the farm is known as a phosphorus surplus and is usually quoted as kg phosphorus/ha.



Surplus phosphorus in soil can leach or run off into water, where it may cause water quality problems linked to nutrient enrichment (eutrophication). The key to minimising soil phosphorus surpluses is to reduce the amount of phosphorus entering the farm and/or increase that leaving the farm gate. The largest phosphorus surpluses are generally found in intensive dairy, beef, pig, and poultry production systems, which have high levels of concentrate feed use per livestock unit. These intensive farms need to take action to reduce their farm phosphorus surpluses, particularly where soil analysis indicates above optimal levels of phosphorus.

Roadmap to Improving Farm Efficiency and Profitability

Later this year we will be publishing a 'Roadmap' on farm management practices, which will show farmers how to reduce their phosphorus surplus, particularly on farms with high soil phosphorus levels. These management practices have the potential to save money in reduced feed and fertiliser costs, while also having a positive impact on water quality.

Some key strategies outlined in the Roadmap are:

- **Soil Testing and Nutrient management planning:** Regular soil testing is essential for the efficient management of nutrients on your farm and can save up to £37 per hectare per year in reduced fertiliser costs. The CAFRE leaflet, 'Five Steps to Managing Nutrients', helps you to understand the information on your soil analysis report, so you can develop a nutrient management plan for your farm. The leaflet is available on the DAERA website at the following link www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dard/Five%20steps%20to%20managing%20nutrients.pdf
- **Improving concentrate feed use efficiency:** Improving concentrate feed use efficiency through increasing forage yields and quality and thus, reducing concentrate feed levels, will help to increase farm profits and reduce phosphorus surpluses.
- **Reducing phosphorus levels in livestock concentrates:** Adopting lower phosphorus in concentrates can substantially reduce on-farm phosphorus surpluses, particularly on farms with high concentrate feed levels.
- **Redistributing nutrients:** Spreading slurry and manures on fields with a crop requirement for the nutrients applied, makes sound business and environmental management sense. Soil testing and nutrient management planning are key to the efficient use of nutrients on farm.
- **Slurry Separation:** Slurry separation enables export of phosphorus in a more concentrated form, compared to that in whole slurry. The phosphorus contained in the separated solid fraction must then be exported and applied to farmland that has a requirement for phosphorus in order to reduce phosphorus surplus on the exporting farm.

There will be more information on the 'Roadmap' strategies in the next edition of this Newsletter.

Sprayer Application Equipment Testing – Explaining the Legal Requirements

Karen Hughes, Environmental Farming Branch

The Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012 brought in a new requirement for testing of pesticide application equipment.

The inspection must be carried out by the National Sprayer Testing Scheme (NSTS) - further details below. Currently it is the only approved test provider.

Sprayer application equipment - law change

From **26 November 2016** all pesticide sprayer application equipment, excluding handheld and knapsack, must have a certificate showing that it has passed an independent inspection before it can be used.

Subsequent testing requirements:

- every five years from 26 November 2016 and every 3 years from 26 November 2020 for boom sprayers, air assisted broadcast sprayers and sprayers attached to aircraft.
- every 6 years from 26 November 2016 for boom sprayers less than 3m wide, foggers, misters, batch dippers and applicators for granular pesticides.



From 26th November 2016 spray application equipment must have passed an independent inspection before it can be used.

New spray equipment must be inspected within 5 years of the date of purchase. Handheld equipment and knapsack sprayers should be regularly checked and maintained.

A person who owns or leases sprayer application equipment must ensure that such equipment is not used by a professional user unless it has passed inspection.

Preparing sprayers for test

The sprayer must be presented for testing in a clean condition, washed both inside and out and the power take-off (PTO) will need to be correctly guarded before the test can commence.

At successful conclusion of the test the Examiner will provide:

- a completed test report form, which should be kept with your crop assurance folder; and
- a uniquely numbered sticker fixed to the machine stating that the machine has passed and the date of the test.

A copy of the test report form is returned to the National Sprayer Testing Scheme (NSTS) where its details are entered onto a database. This information is made available to crop assurance schemes and other bodies for verification purposes.

If you would like to pre-check your sprayer before offering it for test, NSTS has an Operator Check Sheet available online which will give you a good indication of the checks made:
<http://nsts.org.uk/static/assets/downloads/NSTSOOperatorCheckSheet.pdf>

National Sprayer Testing Scheme (NSTS)

The Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA) currently runs the National Sprayer Testing Scheme (NSTS), for more information contact:

Website: www.nsts.org.uk/

Email: info@nsts.org.uk

Telephone: 084 5644 8748

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Farm Family Key Skills (FFKS)

Farm Family Key Skills (FFKS) further training courses are starting in autumn 2016 at CAFRE. Training in Animal Health, Business Planning, on farm Health and Safety and New Technologies (ICT) will all be offered.

To find out more or register your interest for one of these courses please click on:

<http://www.cafre.ac.uk/industry-support/farm-family-key-skills/>

or tick the appropriate box on the postcard attached.

This programme is part funded by the European Union (EU).

Cross-Compliance – Food & Feed Law – Record Keeping

Shirley Fulton, Agri-food Inspection Branch

Good record keeping is essential and helps you make sound management decisions to ensure effective operation of your business. Record keeping is also a legal requirement in many of the Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) under Cross-Compliance, including SMR 4 (Food and Feed Law). This applies to you if you are producing food or feed, products of animal origin (for example, milk or eggs) or rearing animals for food. It is one of the SMRs that you must adhere to for Cross-Compliance in return for receipt of direct agricultural support (including Basic Payment Scheme). This SMR reinforces existing legislation, and therefore farmers should already be meeting most, if not all, of the requirements.

Record keeping can help to quickly identify the origin of a problem if a feed or food-related issue occurs. It can allow action be taken to resolve the difficulty with minimal disruption to a farm business.

Agri-food Inspection Branch (AfIB) staff complete on-the-spot farm inspections to verify compliance with SMR 4 Food and Feed Law.

Failure to maintain adequate on-farm records continues to be the most common breach identified over the last number of years.

Non-compliances relating to record keeping identified during inspections have been:

- **Inadequate medicine records**

If you keep livestock, you must keep a record of any veterinary medicinal products or other treatments administered by you or by your veterinary surgeon. This must identify the animals treated, dates of administration and the withdrawal period (if applicable) of the medicine.

- **Inadequate traceability records**

You must put in place systems and procedures related to the traceability of inputs (that is, food, feed, food-producing animals, and substances incorporated into food/feed) to the farm, identifying:

- The name and address of the supplier
- The nature and quantity of products supplied
- The date of delivery of these inputs.

Accurate record keeping on the farm is essential to ensure the production of safe and wholesome food.

You must also put in place systems and procedures related to the traceability of outputs (that is, food, feed, food producing animals) when they leave the farm, identifying:

- The name and address of the customer
- The nature and quantity of products supplied
- The date on which the products left the farm.

Feed receipts and delivery dockets are acceptable provided all the information above is available.

- **Pesticide application records**

You must keep a record of any pesticides you (or a contractor) apply to agricultural land. This applies to grassland applications as well as crops such as cereals and potatoes.

You are also required to keep records relevant to food or feed safety including:

- **The occurrence of diseases or pests** that may affect food or feed safety
- **The results of any analysis** carried out on farm.

All food and feed producers must maintain adequate records on their farm.

It is up to you to decide which system you use for storing information. This could be computerised or comprise of written records or receipts filed in order. However, it is stressed that the information must be complete, organised and understandable and must be in a readily available format, so that it can be produced when requested.

Compliance with Food & Feed Law, including adequate record keeping, helps ensure the production of safe, wholesome food; underpins your industry; and will reduce the risk of a Cross-Compliance penalty being applied to your business.

Details of all the requirements applicable for SMR 4 can be found in the Cross Compliance Verifiable Standards booklet via the following link:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/cross-compliance-verifiable-standards>

Food and feed record templates are available in your local DAERA Direct office or available at the DAERA website on: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/templates-required-records-animal-food-and-feed-hygiene>

Using Pesticides on the Farm? – Ensure you have adequate training and the right certificate

Steven Johnston, Senior Short Course Manager, CAFRE
Karen Hughes, Environmental Farming Branch

Farmers are being reminded that they must undertake an assessment and obtain an approved certificate of competence if they are applying professional pesticides. If you are not applying the pesticides yourself, you are responsible for ensuring the person applying them has the necessary certificate of competence. This is a legal requirement under the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive.

The assessment for the certificate must be completed by an assessor who is approved by either City and Guilds or Lantra. While training is not compulsory prior to assessment it is recommended.

Training and assessment is available for a range of pesticide application methods including knapsack, boom sprayer, weed wiper, orchard sprayer or slug pellet applicator. For example, it is recommended that training in the use of a boom sprayer should take a total of 12 hours and the subsequent assessment would typically take 2.5 to 3.5 hours.

Topics covered during training include:

- Pesticide Legislation
- Preparation of machinery
- Calibrating equipment
- Hygiene and Personal Protective Equipment
- Interpreting a product label
- Preparing and adding pesticides to a tank
- Safe storage and transport of pesticides
- Disposal of pesticides and containers
- Carrying out an environmental risk assessment
- Record keeping



It is essential to ensure that training is delivered fully and that the certificate of competence received following the assessment will meet the legal requirements. If not then any certificate or records of training received will not be considered valid during an inspection.

Training, assessment and certification

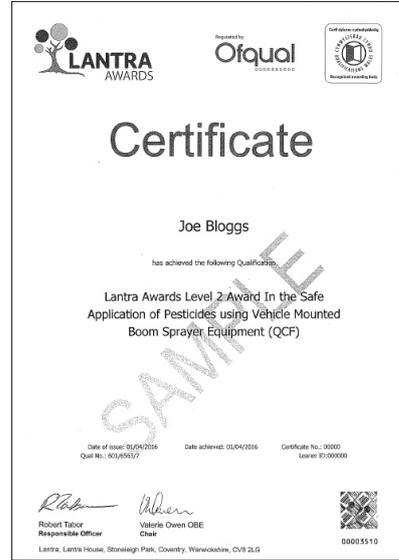
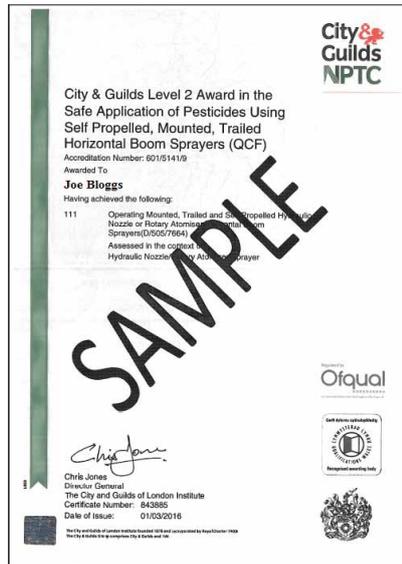
Pesticide training, assessment and certification are available from a range of providers including CAFRE which provides training, assessment and certification by City & Guilds at both Greenmount and Loughry Campuses.

Training, assessment and certification can be arranged at CAFRE by enrolling online at www.cafre.ac.uk/safe-use-pesticides-2/.

If you have any queries about booking a place on this course, you can contact Industry Training Administration by emailing Industry.TrainingAdmin@daera-ni.gov.uk or calling 028 9442 6880. A full list of the specified certificates which meet the legal requirements under the Sustainable Use Directive is available on the DAERA website at: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/plant-and-tree-health/pesticides-use-and-regulations

These certificates are currently only available through City and Guilds or Lantra.

Examples of valid Certificate of competence from City and Guilds and Lantra are as follows:



Code of Practice

Comprehensive advice on all aspects of using pesticides is contained in the DAERA Code of Practice for Plant Protection Products. The Code explains how to use plant protection products safely and so meet the legal conditions which cover their use.

A summary A3 wall chart provides users with a quick reference guide. Both documents can be downloaded from the DAERA website at: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/code-of-practice-for-using-plant-protection-products

Information on pesticide regulations can be found on the DAERA website at: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/daera-pesticide-legislation



The Water Catchment Partnership

Rebecca Allen, Northern Ireland Water

The Water Catchment Partnership (WCP) was formed in 2013 and is a working group with representatives from:

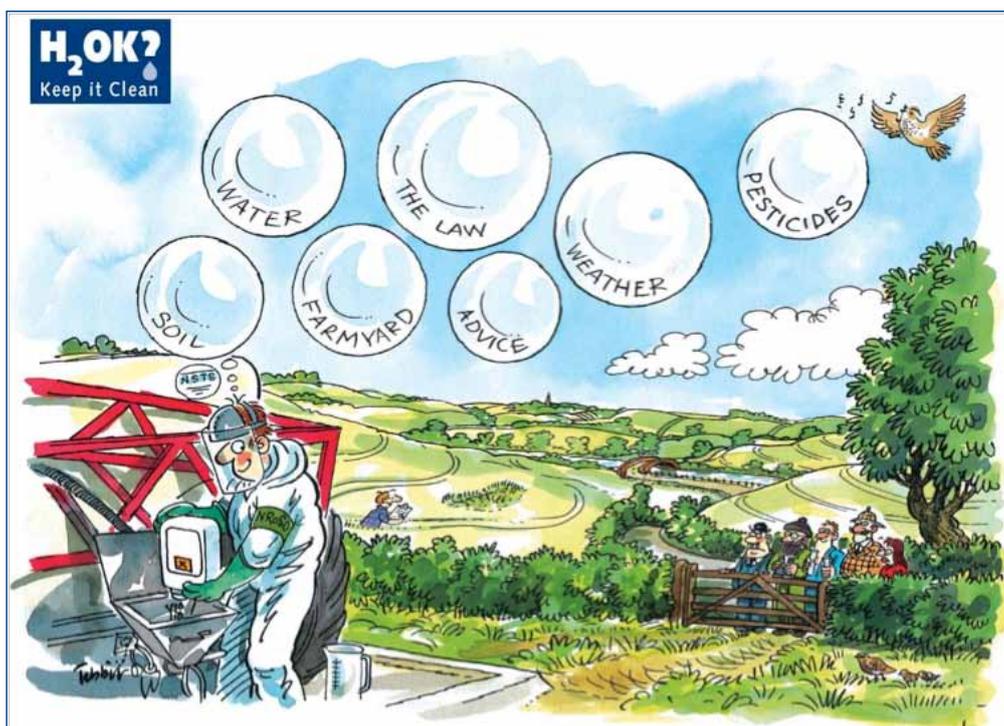
- Northern Ireland Water
- Ulster Farmers’ Union
- Northern Ireland Environment Agency
- College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise
- Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA)
- The Voluntary Initiative

We work together to proactively promote and raise awareness of best practice when using pesticides, and urge all pesticide users to take care when using and disposing of pesticides in the garden, yard and in the field, through a **voluntary** approach to improve water quality.

Pesticides include herbicides, weed killers, fungicides and insecticides. Unfortunately on occasion the incorrect use and disposal of pesticides has led to higher than normal levels of pesticides in raw water supplies.

The broadleaf herbicide **MCPA** commonly used for the control of rushes is the main challenge to raw water quality in Northern Ireland at the moment. MCPA lingers in surface water for up to 6 weeks and is difficult and very costly for NI Water to remove at treatment stage. NI Water must remove this substance to provide safe and wholesome drinking water, and in order to comply with EU Drinking Water Standards.

One of the key messages we endorse is to take extreme care and adopt best practice when using and disposing of chemicals and pesticides. The DAERA **Code of Practice for Plant Protection Products** explains how to use plant protection products safely and so meet the legal conditions which cover their use. This code and a summary quick reference guide can be downloaded from DAERA's website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/code-of-practice-for-using-plant-protection-products.



Research shows that almost 50% of spills occur when filling or washing out a sprayer or container. Did you know that even a single drop of pesticide entering a river can cause water quality problems up to 30km downstream?

The Water Catchment Partnership has been active in attending farming events and agricultural shows, and has produced and distributed press releases and information leaflets to householders. Farm engagement visits and many other initiatives have been completed in problem catchments to raise awareness and provide best practice guidance on grassland pesticide use.

The Partnership's initial focus was in the **Derg catchment** in the west of the Province, due to the very high levels of MCPA detected by NI Water in the raw water. In summer 2015 **Dominic McCann**, the Partnership's Farm Engagement Officer, visited all agricultural properties in the Derg catchment area, promoting the pesticide best practice message, providing guidance and answering questions from pesticide users. Dominic will be continuing catchment visits throughout summer-autumn 2016 in other areas of the Province, so he may be calling in your area to offer pesticide advice and help.

A leaflet specifically from the WCP has been published, providing advice on Pesticides for Water Protection in Northern Ireland. This leaflet and other WCP leaflets can be downloaded at: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/water-catchment-partnership

In addition, a leaflet focussing on grassland weed control and protecting the water environment has also been published. Copies of the *Grassland weed control – A best practice guide to controlling weeds and protecting the environment* – can be obtained from UFU Offices, NI Water, CAFRE or can be downloaded from the VI website at:

www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/_Attachments/resources/1510_S4.pdf



From left to right, Robin Bolton, Senior Crops Development Adviser, CAFRE, Steven McDowell, NIEA Catchment Officer, Barclay Bell, UFU President and Roy Taylor, NI Water Catchment Manager, on the WCP stand at the Balmoral Show.

In **2016**, the Water Catchment Partnership will be attending a number of other Agricultural Shows including the **Omagh, Clogher Valley and Enniskillen Shows**. Please visit us, we would be happy to offer advice or answer any questions you may have!

Integrated Pest Management

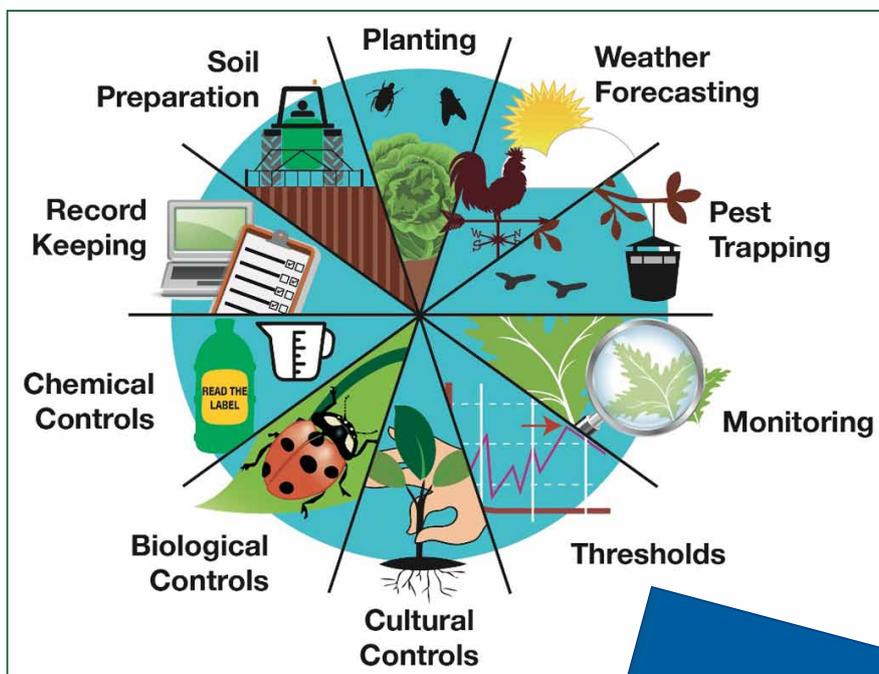
Deirdre O'Reilly, Environmental Farming Branch

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a key element of the EU Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (2009/128/EC). This Directive requires pesticide users to take action to minimise the use of pesticides through the implementation of IPM methods on their farms.

What is IPM?

IPM is a sustainable approach to managing pests by combining biological, cultural, physical and chemical tools in a way that minimises economic, health and environmental risks. IPM emphasises the growth of a healthy crop with the least possible disruption to agricultural ecosystems and encourages natural pest control mechanisms.

An IPM year



New IPM Guide now available

A guide to Integrated Pest Management has been produced by DAERA to assist farmers with understanding the requirements of IPM. It includes an IPM record sheet and provides guidance and information on a range of IPM methods, approaches and benefits. The guide is available on the DAERA website at: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/integrated-pest-management



Complying with Agri-Environment schemes

Ciaran Daly, Countryside Management Delivery Branch

All agri-environment schemes are subject to administrative checks, with a further proportion subjected to farm inspections, known as On-The-Spot Checks (OTSCs) to ensure all relevant terms and conditions are being adhered to at farm level. The European Commission requires that these checks are carried out and that the results for each Member State are reported to provide assurances that funding for agri-environment schemes is being appropriately administered and effectively directed at actions aimed at improving our countryside.

DAERA's Countryside Management Unit (CMU) has outlined some of the agri-environment scheme non-compliances and over-declarations detected at recent checks and are asking farmers to be especially mindful of correctly completing and claiming for the actions they have signed up to as part of their scheme.

More than 75% of all agri-environment scheme non-compliance penalties relate to:

1. Unauthorised field operations on grassland or moorland habitats.
2. Removal of scrub classified as habitat under an AE scheme.
3. Cutting trees, dumping or the presence of livestock in 'Ungrazed Woodland' habitats.

The cultivation of semi natural and species rich grasslands together with damage to moorland, woodland and scrub habitats accounts for more than three quarters of all non-compliance penalties detected at OTSC for agri-environment agreement holders.

If you are an agri-environment scheme participant it is vital that you check the terms and conditions of your agreement before undertaking any field operations. For each habitat or farm feature there are specific conditions called 'management requirements' outlining the correct way to protect and enhance these areas.

Any cultivation, ploughing or reseeding will have a detrimental impact on these high nature value areas. It could also result in costly 'non-compliance' penalties for failure to correctly follow the management requirements set out under your agri-environment scheme.



Fields with plentiful wild-flowers are important habitats that require careful management under agri-environment schemes. Any cultivation, ploughing or reseeding will have a detrimental impact on these high nature value grasslands.



Example of an Orchid flowering on high nature value habitat – these very characteristic plants are a good indicator of species rich grassland.

In addition to checking the quality of habitat management on the farm – DAERA will also conduct measurements to determine the extent to which the quantities claimed are in place by checking areas, lengths and number of units.

An **over-declaration** is where a farmer makes a claim for a larger number of units (hectares/metres/number, etc.) than is actually found to be eligible for payment when these units are checked. In such cases no payment will be made for the area/length not found and an additional penalty may apply.

Some of the most frequently over-declared areas relate to failure of scheme participants to make deductions for both permanent and temporary ineligible features.

A high penalty rate has also applied to field boundary restoration (FBR) claims where there is a difference between the length claimed and the length of completed restoration work that is measured at OTSC.

Therefore farmers should be mindful of making accurate declarations for all claim items including small habitat areas such as grass margins, riparian zones and delayed cutting/grazing habitats which have also attracted significant levels of over-declaration penalties according to recent OTSC results.

Detailed information on how to correctly manage farmland habitat and features under your agri-environment agreement is contained in the scheme booklets which are available on the DAERA website www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/countryside-management-scheme-2007-2013-information-booklet

If you have any queries regarding your agri-environment scheme you should contact your local DAERA Countryside Management Branch.



Example of 'Ragged Robin' flower on high nature value habitat – easily recognised by its ragged pink/purple flowers which can give damp semi-natural pastures a purple haze when abundant in the sward.