



Department of
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FAS news

Farm Advisory System

newsletter

Autumn 2016

Issue 06

Foreword

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

I am pleased to introduce the sixth 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 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:

- Health and safety training;
- Manure exports;
- The correct (and incorrect) use of cattle MC1 (notification of births and deaths) and MC2 (notification of cattle movements); and a
- Reminder on pesticide spraying law changes.

Forthcoming Events

CAFRE UAS UFU Arable Conference 2017

*Tuesday January 10th 2017 at
Greenmount Campus*

The 2017 Arable Conference follows the theme of "Change" in light of the UK vote to leave the EU. Tom Hind of the AHDB will review agricultural policy models from across the globe. Other speakers will cover a broad programme from succession planning, adopting an integrated approach to pest management and changes to RB209 ahead of the launch of the new edition. For more information:
E-mail: kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk
or call 028 9442 6790.



A list of FAS training courses offered by CAFRE is provided on a reply paid postcard so please complete and return the card to register your interest in these topics.

Farm Business Improvement Scheme - Capital

Michael McLean, Capital Investment Branch.

The next phase of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS) is the capital component which opened on 31 October 2016.

Applicants have already been given time to get ready for the Scheme opening. A Preparation Stage for the Capital Scheme opened on 20 September 2016 with the purpose of making information available about the key features of the Scheme and to help farmers to begin thinking about what they needed to do if they were interested in applying for grant support.

The Capital Scheme has two separate tiers – Tier 1 and Tier 2. The grant rate of funding for both tiers in the Scheme is 40% of eligible costs. Two Tranches of the Scheme are planned in its initial phase. The second Tranche is planned for autumn 2017.

Tier 1 is for projects costing from £5,000 - £30,000 (£2,000 - £12,000 grant) and is primarily aimed at the purchase of off-the-shelf equipment and machinery. A reference priced list of eligible items for Tier 1 was made available when the Scheme opened.

Tier 2 is for projects costing from **£30,001 - unlimited (£12,001 - £250,000 maximum available grant)** and is primarily for construction projects and the purchase of higher value equipment linked to the needs in the farmer's business plan.



Some items/areas will be ineligible for grant support through the Capital Scheme, such as: like-for-like replacement or maintenance; consumables such as feed, fuel or spray; investments relating to non-agricultural animals; and items that meet existing statutory requirements such as minimum slurry storage.

The scheme is for those who are actively farming. The following **three key requirements of the Scheme at application stage are:**

- 1) A **Category 1 Farm Business ID** is required for all applicants to the FBIS Capital Scheme. Further information and details on how to apply for a DAERA Farm Business ID can be found at the following link: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dard/dard-ids-customer-service-v4.pdf

- 2) All applicants to the Scheme **must complete the “Making it Safer”** self assessment where the applicant will be required to answer questions relating to their own farm on Slurry, Animals, Falls and Equipment (SAFE). This is an online tool available at www.farmsafenet.org/Safer and a certificate will be issued on completion. It is also recommended that applicants complete the “FarmSafeNet” Health and Safety awareness training at www.farmsafenet.org/quiz prior to completing their “Making It Safer” risk assessment.
- 3) For Tier 1 a simple business plan is required, and it will form part of the application form. For Tier 2 a more detailed business plan will be required which shows that an applicant has carefully considered their investment and what difference the proposed project will make in transforming their farm into a more sustainable, efficient and safer business.

The following documentation will also be required at application stage:

- 1) **Indication of Support letter (both Tiers).**
- 2) **Farm Investment Planner Map (Tier 2 construction projects only).**

Indication of Support letter from Bank/lending institution

All applicants **must** provide a DAERA template letter that has been completed by their bank or lending institution before they make an application for grant support. This letter, referred to as an **Indication of Support Letter**, is designed to encourage applicants to carefully consider the needs and circumstances of their farm business before proceeding with a project and will confirm that the applicant can access funds to complete their project. DAERA has agreed the arrangements for this Letter with the banks.

Tier 1

Obtaining the required letter for Tier 1 should be a straightforward process that could be agreed over the counter at your local bank or lending institution.

Tier 2

For Tier 2 projects, banks or other lending institutions will first want to consider your business plan. Please note that banks have indicated that the process could take up to two weeks to produce the required letter, after scrutiny of the applicant's business plan by the bank or other lending institution.

The DAERA bank letter template can be found on the DAERA website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/daera-fbis-capital-indication-support

Farm Investment Planner Map

Applicants seeking grant support for Tier 2 construction projects must submit a Farm Investment Planner Map, outlining the proposed construction project as part of their application.

The DAERA **Farm Investment Planner Mapping Tool** will help you prepare a site layout plan before deciding to proceed with a project in Tier 2 of the Scheme.

You can access **The Farm Investment Planner map** through DAERA Online services which can be found at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/daera-online-services and a Government Gateway ID will be required to access.

Guidance on how you can apply for a Government Gateway ID can be found on the DAERA website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/how-access-daera-online-services.

For those thinking of applying, here are some **key documents** that will be **required** by DAERA at the **Letter of Offer stage**.

Proof of age - For Tier 1, extra selection criteria points are available for applicants aged 40 years or less on **28 October 2016**. Note this must be the applicant who must be named under the DAERA Farm Business ID number.

Proof of Head of Holding status - For Tier 2, extra selection criteria points are available for applicants aged 40 years or less **and** who are verified as head of holding on **28 October 2016**. DAERA can verify those applicants aged 40 or less who have already been assessed as head of holding, and those who are the only person named under the DAERA Farm Business ID number will be accepted as head of holding for application purposes. Others will be required to provide proof at Letter of Offer acceptance stage.

Proof of educational attainment - For Tier 1 and Tier 2, proof of educational attainment will be required at Letter of Offer acceptance stage for applicants seeking extra points under this selection criterion. This criterion applies to all ages of applicants and not just those under 40. The education received must be at Level 2 or above in agriculture or horticulture. Further guidance will be made available when the Scheme opens.

Roadshow events for applicants

The Department has been holding a series of roadshow events for applicants throughout November, to highlight the details of the Capital Scheme and to answer questions.

Further information on the Scheme including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) can be found on the DAERA website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/farm-business-improvement-scheme

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Do's and Don'ts of Cattle Notification Documents

Graham Fallows, Veterinary Service Animal Health Branch.

Birth and Death Notifications

Always send your calf birth notifications (by DAERA-on-line services or MC1) in good time so they arrive with DAERA within 27 days of the birth of the oldest calf on the notification. Calves whose birth is notified later than 27 days after the date of birth will have an NNO status applied to the animal. This will prevent the movement of this animal to markets or other herds.

Never leave your calf birth notifications (by DAERA-on-line services or MC1) to the last minute and so risk postal delays, public holidays or computer problems causing you to miss the 27 day deadline.

Always notify the death of an animal in your herd, (by DAERA-on-line services or MC1). This notification must be made within 7 days of the death of the animal to avoid potential Cross-Compliance penalties. Rendering plants, incinerator operators, hunt kennels or veterinary labs cannot do this for you, even though rendering plants may move the animal out of your herd on APHIS.

Always tag and notify the birth/death of aborted, stillborn, or euthanised calves (by DAERA-on-line services or MC1), so that BVD (Bovine Viral Diarrhoea) results can be processed for them. (All of these animals must be tested for BVD in the same way as living calves). Remember also to enter these animals in your herd register!

N.B. aborted or stillborn calves or calves which die within 24 hours of birth should, in addition, be reported to your local DAERA office by telephone or in person, within 24 hours, so that their dams can be tested for Brucellosis.

Movement Notifications

Always fully complete your MC2 (Notification of Cattle Movement) documents including the name, address and herd number of the destination herd, and the date of the move.

Never give a partially completed MC2 to a purchaser, as an unscrupulous purchaser may use the partially completed document for fraudulent purposes.

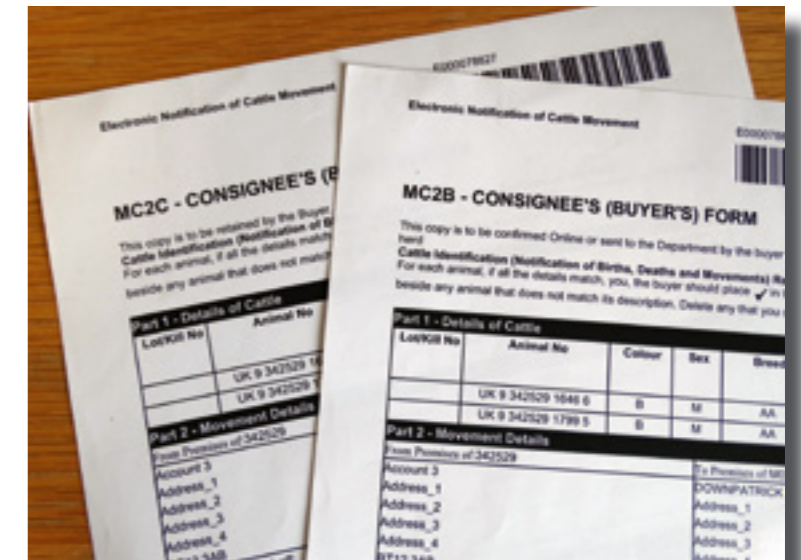
Always personally send or deliver the white copy of your MC2 document to DAERA. This ensures that the move is correctly recorded and helps ensure that your herd list on APHIS is up to date.

Never give the white copy of the MC2 to a purchaser even if they say they will send/deliver it to DAERA for you. An unscrupulous purchaser may amend the details on the copy sent to DAERA for fraudulent purposes.

Never give a collector of dead animals an MC2 (Notification of Cattle Movements) document for a dead animal. An MC2 is not required and is inappropriate for the movement of a dead animal and may enable that animal's identity to be used for fraudulent activity.

Always carefully check the tag numbers and description of bought in animals before confirming them into your herd (by ticking the column on the MC2).

Never confirm animals into your herd on an MC2 without first checking the tag numbers and descriptions carefully. Discrepancies discovered at this stage are easier to resolve than if discovered at a herd test or cattle identification inspection at a later stage.



Are your Payments at Risk?

Ken Lavery, Area-based Schemes Operational Policy Branch.

A significant number of farm businesses inspected in 2015 had their Basic Payment, Greening payment, Areas of Natural Constraint payment and other area based scheme support payments reduced because they did not meet the Northern Ireland Cross-Compliance requirements.

Main Areas of Concern

Cattle recording

As in previous years, there were a very high number of breaches of the requirements to correctly identify cattle and to report their movements, births and deaths and to maintain up-to-date records. Please refer to pages 4 and 5 on how to avoid breaches in this area.

Nitrates

The level of compliance in relation to the protection of water against nitrate pollution Statutory Management Requirement has improved compared to previous years. However a significant number of breaches were still identified against the requirements relating to the correct storage and use of nitrates. Breaches were again identified because of silage effluent and livestock manure, both considered to be nitrogen fertilisers, being allowed knowingly or otherwise to enter waterways or water in underground strata. These breaches were frequently associated with poorly maintained silage or livestock manure facilities or due to poor management of silage effluent and livestock manure.

Food and Feed Law

Breaches relating to the food and feed law standards continued to be an issue and in particular the requirement to observe the testing frequency required in legislation for Tuberculosis/ Brucellosis or other diseases.

Other Areas of Concern

Animal welfare remains an area of concern. Most breaches were identified against requirements covering care for sick animals, appropriate checking of animals and provision of a wholesome diet.

As far as Good Agricultural and Environment Condition (GAEC) is concerned high breach levels were identified against the measure designed to retain field boundaries and prevent hedge, tree and scrub cutting during the bird nesting season.

Further information on Cross-Compliance

The NI Cross-Compliance standards are set out in 7 GAEC measures and in 13 Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs) covering the environment, public, animal and plant health and animal welfare. Details of all the requirements can be found in the booklet entitled "Cross-Compliance Verifiable Standards Summary". A copy of this booklet can be obtained by



contacting us at 028 9052 5072 or by visiting the Cross-Compliance section of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/cross-compliance-verifiable-standards

Penalties for breaches of the Cross-Compliance standards due to negligence generally attract a 3% penalty, but these can be reduced to 1% or increased to 5% depending on the circumstances of the breach. Penalties for breaches classed as intentional will generally attract a 20% penalty but these can be reduced to 15% or increased to 100% again depending on the circumstances of the breach.

2016 Cross-Compliance Inspection Programme

The 2016 Cross-Compliance inspection programme has started and inspectors are again visiting farms to check that the Northern Ireland Cross-Compliance requirements are being met. As before if breaches are found, penalties will be applied, so it is vital that you familiarise yourself with the Cross-Compliance requirements appropriate to your business and make sure that you are meeting them. It is important that you do this as it is the only way you can reduce the likelihood of Cross-Compliance penalties being applied to your claim and maximise the amount of area-based scheme funding paid to you.

Don't miss the 31 January deadline for submitting organic manure export records

Alan Morrow, Countryside Management Delivery Branch.

There is a requirement within the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) to limit the amount of total nitrogen (N) from livestock manures that may be applied to land. The quantity must not exceed 170 kg N per ha per year and is referred to as the "livestock manure nitrogen loading limit". This is to help prevent the application of excessive nutrients to land which can cause water pollution.



Most Northern Ireland farms are operating below this limit but for some, particularly the more intensive dairy, beef, pig and poultry farms, it is necessary to export surplus manures to other farms which are operating below the threshold. This nutrient redistribution can be a win-win situation. It assists the exporting farm business with NAP compliance and avoids

the possibility of a Cross-Compliance breach and it benefits the importing business by reducing costs associated with purchased chemical fertiliser.

Nitrogen (N) loading

You can calculate the N loading for your farm business by dividing the total eligible agricultural area (the area used to activate Basic Payment Scheme entitlements) by the amount of N excreted by the livestock on the farm during the year. Detailed guidance on how to obtain the N excretion values for various classes of livestock and how to arrive at the N loading are contained in the NAP Guidance Booklet 2015 – 2018 and NAP workbook. Alternatively, you can use the 'Nitrogen Loading Calculator' available from the Farm Nutrient Calculators section of DAERA online services which can be accessed at www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Record keeping

To comply with NAP, all farm businesses importing or exporting organic manures are required to keep a record of the quantity and type of each manure moved on or off the holding. This applies regardless of whether the export or import is to a farm within Northern Ireland or elsewhere.

Changes to the NAP in 2015 mean that **those exporting organic manure from their farm must submit their records to NIEA annually by the 31 January for the previous calendar year**. While both importer and exporter must keep these records, only the exporter is required to submit their records to NIEA. Failing to submit your records on time will result in the exported manure being included in the livestock manure loading calculation for your farm at a future inspection.

What needs to be submitted to NIEA by 31 January 2017?

Your record must contain:

- Quantity and type of manure exported during 2016 (calendar year);
- Date on which consignment was exported;
- Name and DAERA business reference number of the farmer who received the manure. In the absence of a business reference number the signature of the receiving farmer is required;
- Name and address of the transporter if involved.

The export form must be signed by the exporting farmer and, although not compulsory, it is a good idea to get the importing farmer to also sign the form, thereby reducing the risk of a misunderstanding at a later date.

All of these details are contained within the Nitrates Action Programme 2015 – 2018 Guidance Booklet which may be accessed at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/2015-2018-nitrates-action-programme-and-phosphorus-regulations-and-associated-documents. A blank organic export form can also be downloaded from this site.

Is it too late to submit export records for 2015?

No. Records for organic manures exported during 2015 should have been submitted to NIEA by 31 January 2016 if the exported manure was to be taken into account by NIEA when calculating the N Loading for your holding. However, given that this was a new requirement in 2015 and allowing for bedding-in period, the opportunity remains **to submit your outstanding 2015 records up until 1 January 2017**. Note carefully that this accommodation is a one-off and no such flexibility will exist for the **2016 records which must be submitted by 31 January 2017**.

Please send your completed form to:

DAERA, Northern Ireland Environment Agency,
Water Management Unit, 17 Antrim Road, Tonagh, Lisburn, Co Antrim, BT28 3AL

Timely Reminder!

Alastair Cameron,
Crops and Sustainability Development Branch.

Soil sampling time is approaching

Mid winter is the ideal time for soil sampling provided there has been no organic manure, lime or bagged fertiliser applied in the previous 3 months. A soil sample will be adequate for 4ha (10 acres) in one or more fields provided they have been under similar management. This service costs approximately £9 including VAT and represents excellent value for money to enable you to improve soil fertility. Soil sampling augers are available from local DAERA Direct Offices. When collecting a soil sample, approximately 20 cores should be taken in a 'W' pattern across the field to ensure representative sampling.



Reduce paperwork – maintain your herd register on APHIS

DAERA now offers cattle farmers the option of maintaining their herd register on APHIS instead of using an on-farm electronic or paper herd register.

Detailed guidance and a list of commonly asked questions are available on the DAERA website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/online-herd-register-guidance-cattle

Further help:

If you wish to register to access APHIS Online or other DAERA Online Services please contact the DAERA Online Services Helpdesk on 028 9442 6699 (Mon–Fri 9am to 5pm) or E-mail onlineservices@daera-ni.gov.uk.

Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) - Don't forget about the new requirements when applying high phosphorus manures

Alan Morrow, DAERA Countryside Management Delivery Branch.

Following the NAP and Phosphorus Regulations review in 2014, a revised NAP for 2015-2018 came into effect on 1 January 2015. The revised programme included a number of changes. While many of these became effective on the 1 January 2015, the measure governing the limit on land application of phosphorus (P) rich organic manures was deferred until 1st January 2017.

Efficient use of manures

The aim of the NAP and Phosphorus Regulations is to improve water quality across Northern Ireland through the improved use of farm nutrients. Storing and applying farm nutrients to land in accordance with NAP creates a win-win situation as costs associated with purchased chemical fertiliser can be reduced through the more effective use of manure. Matching nutrient supply with crop requirement is an important aspect of achieving this efficiency. However, in meeting the nitrogen (N) requirement, particular care must be taken with manures containing a high proportion of P compared to N. This is necessary to ensure that P is not oversupplied, as excess P can result in a deterioration of water quality.

What are P-rich manures?

Organic manures which contain more than 0.25 kg of total P per 1 kg of total N are considered to be P-rich manures for the purpose of the NAP. Examples of these manures include the solid portion of separated pig slurry, pig FYM, horse manure, layer manure, turkey litter and duck manure. While pig slurry in most cases is **not** regarded as High-P, it does come under this classification when dry matter content reaches 6% (the most common value is 4%).

Examples of P-rich manures

Manure type	Dry matter content (%)	Total N (Kg per m ³)	Total phosphate (P ₂ O ₅) (Kg per m ³)	Proportion of Total P to Total N
Pig slurry	6	4.4	2.6	0.26
Pig FYM	25	7.0	6.0	0.37
Horse manure	30	7.0	5.0	0.31
Layer manure	30	16.0	13.0	0.36
Turkey litter	60	30.0	25.0	0.37
Duck manure	25	6.5	5.5	0.37
Separated pig slurry (solid portion)	20	5.0	4.6	0.4

What is required prior to applying P-rich manures?

From 1 January 2017 you must check that there is a crop requirement for phosphate on the land before using these P-rich manures. This is consistent with what is already required for other types

of fertiliser such as chemical fertiliser containing phosphate (P₂O₅), sewage sludge and any other organic manure applied to land under a Waste Management Licence or exemption (e.g. abattoir waste and some anaerobic digestates). Remember it is a legal requirement not to apply these fertilisers to grass or other crops unless there is a crop requirement for phosphate, taking account of the soil fertility as indicated by the soil phosphorus (P) index and the supply of phosphate from the application of other fertilisers. Note that in the case of P-rich manures, fulfilling this obligation is a Cross-Compliance requirement.



How to establish crop requirement when applying P-rich manures

The only way to establish crop requirement is by obtaining a soil analysis which will give the P index for your soil. This must be done for each individual field where P-rich manures are to be applied. A soil sample, made up of approximately 20 sub-samples, needs to be taken for each field up to a maximum of 4 ha in area – larger fields require additional samples to ensure that the soil analysis is representative of the entire field. To obtain an accurate analysis you must allow at least three months between last application of any fertiliser (organic or chemical) and taking the soil sample.

Once the P index for the field is known, refer to the “Fertiliser standards for phosphate application” table in the NAP 2015 – 2018 Guidance Booklet to enable you make a decision on the quantity of P-rich manure needed to meet crop requirement. Alternatively you could use the Crop Nutrient Calculator, which can be found in the Farm Nutrient Calculators section of DAERA online services, to help you determine crop need and to work out fertiliser and manure application rates. For further information on this tool and for training on this topic please complete the reply paid post card by selecting Nitrates and Nutrient Management and return it to CAFRE.

What additional records are required?

Compliance checks will require the following records to be kept:

- area and location of fields where P-rich manure or chemical P₂O₅ fertilisers have been applied;
- quantity and date of phosphate fertiliser application, which includes all manures, to each field;
- results of soil analysis and
- details of crop grown

Although you are not required to have made any of the calculations before an on-farm inspection by NIEA, doing so makes sense. It will help you check that you are not in breach of the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) Regulations and thus risking penalties on your Basic Payment Scheme (BPS). Importantly, it will also ensure that your nutrient inputs are in line with the crop requirement.

Exemptions

These additional requirements do not apply where P-rich manures (up to 7kg N per ha) only make a minor contribution to the overall nutrient loading of the farm. Examples of this may include farms with a small number of horses or a hobby poultry enterprise in addition to the main farm business.

Further information

Detailed information and guidance on phosphate application may be obtained in section 7 and Annex J of the NAP 2015-2018 and Phosphorus Regulations Guidance Booklet. You can also obtain worksheets to help calculate the amount of phosphate required by crops in the NAP Guidance Workbook. Both of these documents are available online at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/2015-2018-nitrates-action-programme-and-phosphorus-regulations-and-associated-documents

For DAERA online services go to www.daera-ni.gov.uk and select "online services."

Avoiding veterinary medicines residues in food

Michael Hatch, Veterinary Service & Helen Garry, Agri-food Inspection Branch

Veterinary medicines play an important role in the control and prevention of disease and animal suffering, but they have the potential to cause harm if they are not used properly. Residues within food-producing animals must not exceed the Maximum Residue Limit (MRL) at the time the animal is placed on the market or presented for slaughter. Unauthorised veterinary medicinal products must not be used in food-producing animals and residues of these substances must not be present in the animals.

As a food business operator you are responsible for ensuring that veterinary medicines are used in a safe, responsible and effective way and that the required records are maintained.

The use of veterinary medicines is covered in 3 Statutory Management Requirements (SMR's) within Cross-Compliance;

1. SMR 4: Food and Feed Law,
2. SMR 5: Restrictions on the use of Substances having Hormonal or Thyrostatic Action and Beta-agonists in farm animals and
3. SMR 13: Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes.

If you use any veterinary medicines on farmed animals you must adhere to the following:

- Purchase medicines from a reputable source;
- Only use medicines authorised in the UK and for the species of animal that you are treating;
- Use the medicine in accordance with the manufacturer's and/or your veterinary surgeon's recommendations;

- Ensure the withdrawal periods given in the product instructions are adhered to. This allows time for the level of residues in the tissues or products to become lower than or equal to the MRL; and
- Keep a record of any veterinary medicine products administered by you or your veterinary surgeon.

The link below provides advice on record keeping. Templates are also available in your local DAERA Direct Office:

www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/animal-medicines-and-residues

DAERA inspectors routinely carry out on farm inspections to ensure medicine records are kept in line with the requirements of the legislation. Residue checks are also completed on animals and their products (for example meat, milk, eggs, honey), along with animal feeds.

Any breaches identified may result in:

- A financial reduction in your Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and payments in respect of the other schemes falling under the scope of Cross-Compliance;
- Condemnation of the food product; and
- Prosecution.

Compliance with these statutory requirements makes a vital contribution to ensuring public and animal health, while underpinning the industry's important export markets.



Remember New Pesticide Sprayer Test Requirements apply from 26 November 2016!

Leanne Harris, Environmental Farming Branch.

Testing requirements for sprayer application equipment

From **26 November 2016** all pesticide sprayer application equipment, excluding handheld and knapsack, must meet the new requirements for the testing of pesticide application equipment.

What are the requirements?

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

Subsequent testing requirements:

- Every 5 years from 26 November 2016 and every 3 years from 26 November 2020 for boom sprayers over 3m wide, air assisted broadcast sprayers and sprayers attached to aircraft.
- Every 6 years from 26 November 2016 for boom sprayers 3m wide or less, foggers, misters, batch dippers and applicators for granular pesticides.

**What do I need to do?**

To apply for a test you need to contact the National Sprayer Testing Scheme (NSTS) who is the approved provider for certification of pesticide application equipment in the UK.

For more information contact:

Website: www.nsts.org.uk/

E-mail: info@nsts.org.uk

Telephone: 0845 644 8748

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

An encouraging 2015 Nitrates Action Programme farm inspection report

Alan Morrow, Countryside Management Delivery Branch.

The Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) aims to improve water quality by protecting water against pollution caused by nutrients from agricultural sources and to prevent such pollution occurring in the future. In particular it promotes efficiency in the use of nutrients and best practice in managing manures and chemical fertilisers. Each year a number of farm businesses are inspected by NIEA to assess compliance with this legislation.

Considerable improvement in NAP compliance

While recent results from 2015 NAP farm inspections confirm improved compliance on certain aspects of NAP, it was the overall reduction in non-compliances that provides most encouragement. Non-compliances found during the 2015 inspection round fell by over 50% when compared with those discovered in the previous year. Aspects contributing to this improvement include reduced nitrate pollution, fewer farms exceeding the nitrogen (N) loading threshold and a smaller number of defective storage facilities.

Most common non-compliances during 2015

Despite showing a significant improvement on the 2014 inspection figures, defective storage remained the most common non-compliance in 2015. This was closely followed by pollution caused by nitrates. Next, in third place, were issues arising from manure and fertiliser spreading.

Attention to detail

In many cases these are areas where much improvement may be achieved by a slight change in practice or by carrying out timely repairs. Begin by checking slurry and effluent transfer and storage facilities – this should be done regularly and especially in the run up to and during the closed spreading period. However, when doing this, never ever enter a tank as there is always the risk of gas. Only people who have the proper training and equipment should enter a tank. In an emergency, contact the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service who have the right training and equipment to deal with the situation.



All run-off should be contained or collected.

It is important to regularly monitor the storm water outfalls leaving your yard, drains and other watercourses on the farm, ensuring that they remain totally free from pollution. Carry on doing this during the winter months as a contaminated drain or waterway may go unnoticed when there is no other reason to be in the fields.

NAP and Cross-Compliance

All farmers claiming under area-based schemes, including the Basic Payment Scheme, must meet the NI Cross-Compliance conditions. NAP forms part of these requirements, therefore where farmers do not comply with NAP, their area-based payments may be reduced. The new NAP 2015 – 2018 guidance book and the summary document is available on the DAERA website: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/2015-2018-nitrates-action-programme-and-phosphorus-regulations-and-associated-documents.

Further information about Cross-Compliance is also available on the DAERA website: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/cross-compliance-verifiable-standards

Safe Use of Pesticides training still available at CAFRE

Paul McHenry, Rural Training and Development Branch.

If you've been reading any of the farming journals over the last few years or been at any meetings, I'm sure you have heard about spraying and the changes to the law regarding the need for training before using pesticides. Many people are asking what does it mean for me and what do I have to do?

Why do you need a certificate of competence to apply pesticides?

The laws in regards to spraying haven't really changed a lot in nearly 30 years, only recently have they been updated. All professional users of pesticides must now have a certificate of competence. Before the law changed last year, farmers who were born before 31 December 1964 could spray their own land under an exemption called "Grand Father Rights". That exemption has now gone and all users of professional pesticides must now have a certificate of competence, irrespective of age. So if you are spraying now without a certificate of competence you are breaking the law.

What's the benefit for you in getting the certificate of competence?

On the spraying course you will learn:

- In detail how the sprayer works;
- How to reduce drift and how to reduce your chemical bill through increased efficiency;
- How to reduce wastage and run off by incorrect filling;
- How to properly protect yourself from the dangers of working with chemicals;
- What to do if something goes wrong and who to phone if it does;

It is also a requirement of some quality assurance schemes such as 'Red Tractor'.

What types of certificate of competence are available?

Every type of machine needs a different licence.

Firstly you need to take and pass a PA1 theory module before you can do the practical.

When you have your PA1, you can add the practical units you require:

- PA2A** – Tractor boom sprayer
- PA2F** – Weed-wiper
- PA3A** – Orchard sprayer
- PA4S** – Slug pellet applicator
- PA6A** – Knapsack sprayer
- PA6AW** – Knapsack sprayer in or near water

How can you get onto a course at CAFRE?

CAFRE with its three well placed campuses offer the full range of pesticide courses throughout the year. On average the training will take you a full day and you will come back for an assessment a few days later which can take a few hours to complete. To get onto a course, visit the CAFRE website and follow the links to industry training to see where and when the next available course is: www.cafre.ac.uk

If you have a query or want more information regarding pesticide training contact the industry training administration team on (028) 9442 6880.

DAERA Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) On the Spot Check (OTSC)?

Jeanelle Cooke, Countryside Management Inspectorate Branch.

The 15th May 2016 was the deadline this year for all Single Application Forms (SAF) to be submitted to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) to avoid any late penalties. Completion of a SAF indicated that the farm business wished to claim all or some of the following payments, Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) including Regional Reserve, Greening, Young Farmer, Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC), Northern Ireland Countryside Management Scheme, Organic Farming Scheme and Forestry Schemes.

Eligibility Criteria

For businesses to receive payment the European Commission require claimants to meet the following criteria.

- Be undertaking agricultural activity
- Hold entitlements and have eligible ground
- Ensure that any individual parcel of ground is at least 0.1ha
- Have the land on which payment is claimed at their disposal on 15th May in the claim year

What businesses receive an On the Spot Check (OTSC)

All businesses that have submitted a SAF may be selected for inspection to ensure the eligibility criteria has been met. DAERA complete administrative checks on all claims and these are followed up by land inspections on a proportion of these claims. These land inspections are known as On the Spot Checks (OTSC's). OTSC's are completed on 5% of the claims. Claims are selected on a random or risk basis and in 2016 1528 businesses will be subject to inspection.

How and when are Inspections completed?

OTSC's commenced after the 15th May and will be completed by two methods:

Classical Inspection

2% of inspections will be completed classically which involves a DAERA inspector walking all the land that has been claimed for BPS. Classical inspections start shortly after the application period closes. A classical OTSC involves an inspector physically visiting the business and assessing the eligibility of the land claimed. To complete an OTSC an inspector will:

- Inspect and report on all agricultural land claimed
- Confirm or amend all field boundaries
- Amend captured ineligible features, where appropriate
- Capture new ineligible features
- Record the agricultural activity taking place
- Record details of stock kept
- Record details of any suspected breaches of Cross-Compliance
- Capture photographic evidence where required
- Check documentation/authorisations from appropriate authorities which permit farmers to carry out specific activities i.e. field boundary removal etc.

Inspectors use Tough Pads which are Geo-spatial measuring tools to capture all information required at the OTSC. This ruggedised equipment enables inspectors to work in most weather conditions. The Tough Pads will be loaded with your farms most recent LPS farm map and ortho photographs. Inspectors also use GPS (Global Positioning Satellites) to ensure sub meter accuracy when they are measuring features which are not eligible for payment.

Control with Remote Sensing (CwRS)

98% of inspections will be completed using Control with Remote Sensing (CwRS) which involves using satellite and or aerial imagery to assess the eligibility of the land and replicates essentially what happens at a classical inspection. Should further information be needed to determine the eligibility of an area of land an inspector can complete a Rapid Field Visit (RFV) to clarify a specific query e.g. density of rush. CwRS inspections start as soon as imagery becomes available. The increased use of remote sensing technology across EU member states has made the processing of inspections more efficient. CwRS has proved to be an important tool in improving DAERA's payment performance over the last 4 years.



What happens after an Inspection

After the inspections findings have been processed the OTSC results will be applied to the current claim and previous years claims if appropriate. Businesses will receive an OTSC inspection report which details the findings from the inspection. Businesses have an opportunity to examine this report and respond if necessary. If no further queries are raised the business that has been subject to inspection will be passed for payment and the claim credited to the farm business account to which it relates.

Farm Family Key Skills aims to 'Make it Safer' on farms

Kevin McGrath, Rural Training and Development Branch.

Farm Family Key Skills (FFKS) is an initiative under The Farm Business Improvement Scheme (FBIS), which is a key element of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

The FFKS scheme offers a suite of comprehensive training courses which covers key areas such as Business Planning, Health and Safety, Animal Health and New Technologies (ICT). These short courses are aimed at farmers, farm family members and employees associated with both the agricultural and horticultural sectors. The first training programme commenced in spring 2016 with the delivery of Pig (Animal Health) training with plans in place to deliver Health and Safety training in autumn 2016. The Northern Ireland Rural Development Council (RDC) has been appointed to deliver this training.



The Health & Safety training programme will cover the four main areas of risk on farm; Slurry, Animals, Falls and Equipment with training delivery taking place on farms.

Workshops will also cover the Making it Safer tool. There will be a requirement to submit a Making it Safer self-assessment certificate when applying to the Farm Business Investment Scheme. These workshops will provide an overview of the tool and how to access it. If you would like more information on how you could enrol on any of the short courses within the Farm Family Key Skills (FFKS) programme, please go to www.cafre.ac.uk/industry-support/ or E-mail: kt.admin@daera-ni.gov.uk or call CAFRE Knowledge Transfer Administration on 028 9442 6790.

Basic Payment Scheme – Greening Requirements

Karen Campbell, Area-Based Schemes Operational Policy Branch.

All farmers applying for payment under the Basic Payment Scheme must comply with the greening requirements on all of the eligible agricultural land on their holding. In return, they will receive a Greening Payment calculated as a percentage of the total value of the Basic Payment Scheme entitlements they activate each year.

Greening Requirements and Exemptions

There are three elements to greening. These are: Permanent Grassland, Crop Diversification and Ecological Focus Areas (EFAs).

Permanent grassland - This relates to the requirement to retain permanent grassland and to protect environmentally sensitive permanent grassland.

Crop Diversification - This is designed to encourage a diversity of crops on holdings with 10 or more hectares of arable land.

Ecological Focus Areas - This is designed to improve biodiversity on farms and to provide habitats for species in decline or at risk of extinction on holdings with more than 15 hectares of arable land.

There are a number of exemptions from the greening requirements meaning that certain applicants, depending on their land use, will not have to undertake some or all of the greening requirements but will still receive the Greening Payment.

Information on the greening exemptions and requirements can be found in the 2016 Guide to the Greening Payment which is located on the DAERA website and can be accessed using the following link: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/guide-greening-payment-2016

Calculation of the Ecological Focus Area Requirement

Farmers with more than 15 hectares of land classified as arable must ensure that an area equivalent to at least 5% of this land is EFA, unless they qualify for one of the exemptions. For 2017, there is a further point to note for those with an EFA requirement who declare any of the following as EFA:

- landscape features¹ located on non-arable land which are adjacent to arable land;
- areas with short rotation coppice; and or
- afforested areas used to claim SFP in 2008.



¹Landscape features that can be used for EFA are hedges, sheughs, dry stone walls, archaeological features and earth banks.

Farmers who declare any of the above three types of EFA as EFA, should be aware that the area of these will be added to the area of land classified as arable used in the calculation of their 5% EFA requirement. Therefore, the EFA requirement for their business will be larger than 5% of the area of land classified as arable.

For areas with short rotation coppice and afforested areas used to claim SFP in 2008, the area to be taken into account in the 5% EFA calculation will be the area declared as EFA.

The area of landscape features located on non-arable land to be taken account in the 5% EFA calculation will be calculated by multiplying the length of the landscape feature by the appropriate EFA conversion factor, where applicable.

If a landscape feature is adjacent to land classified as arable and located entirely within a non arable classified field, the entire converted area of the landscape feature will be added to the arable area of the holding in the calculation of the 5% EFA requirement.

Where landscape features form a field boundary, the field boundary will be in the middle of the landscape feature. Therefore, in cases where a landscape feature forms a field boundary between an arable field and a non-arable field, 50% of the landscape feature will be located on arable land and 50% on non-arable land. Therefore, in these instances, when calculating the 5% EFA requirement, 50% of the area of the landscape feature will be added to the arable area of the holding.

Worked examples illustrating the calculations in these scenarios can be found on the DAERA website at the following location:

www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/area-based-schemes-2016-information-and-guidance

Non-compliance Reductions and Penalties

In 2015 and 2016, if farmers did not fully comply with their greening requirements, a non-compliance reduction would have been applied to the Greening Payment. From 2017, greening penalties are also expected to be applicable, in addition to the greening non-compliance reductions.

As a result, from 2017, there will be a greater financial impact on the Greening Payment, if farmers do not meet the greening requirements, where they are applicable. It is, therefore, important to understand the greening requirements and comply with them, where necessary.

Further details on greening penalties will be provided in the Guide to the Greening Payment in early 2017.

Greening Simplification

The European Commission has announced 15 simplification proposals to greening requirements. These proposals are currently under consideration and discussion. Further details on the applicable changes and their timeframe for implementation will be communicated when the simplification proposals have been confirmed by the Commission.

Water Framework Directive (WFD) River Basin Management Plans (RBMP's)

Siobhan Bowers, Environmental Farming Branch.

River Basins

A river basin is a portion of land that drains water to form a river and its tributaries. A healthy water environment is essential for our drinking water, as well as our social and economic activities.

Managing the water quality of river basins (termed River Basin Management) is a key element in implementing the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Northern Ireland has been divided into three river basin districts (the North Western, the Neagh Bann and the North Eastern – each of which has a WFD River Basin Management Plan (RBMP). The North Western and Neagh Bann are also international River Basin Districts because they are connected with the Republic of Ireland.



RBMPs

RBMPs set out objectives for the improvement of specific water bodies; that is rivers, lakes, marine waters and groundwater. The RBMPs are reviewed and updated on a six year cycle, always taking into account the most recent scientific knowledge and water quality assessments. The First Cycle RBMP's were established in 2009 and covered the period up to 2015. The Second Cycle plans are now underway and run until 2021, with a set of final plans then being identified for up to 2027. Within each of the plans a

Programme of Measures is a key component setting out the actions required to meet the 2021 objectives, as well as ensuring there is no deterioration in our current water quality.

Targets for WFD "Good" Status

The pressures and activities impacting on our waterways are routinely monitored and assessed by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA). In 2015, at the start of the Second Cycle for WFD, 37% of water bodies were found to be currently at high or good water quality. The target for 2021 is to reach up to 70% of water bodies at high or good.

Diffuse pollution is the release of potential pollutants from a range of activities that, individually, may have little effect on the water environment, but, when combined, can have a significant effect. Diffuse agricultural pollution remains the most significant pressure affecting our water

bodies and hence can lead to failure to reach good water quality. It is estimated that in 40 % of all 450 rivers and 76 % of all 21 lakes, the main cause of failure is due to the impacts of agriculture.

What is being done?

The main tool for reducing diffuse pollution from agriculture is through the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) and associated Phosphorus Regulations. They have delivered significant improvements to date in water quality since they were first introduced in 2007, reducing failures due to nutrients from around 60% to 40%.

NIEA carry out river surveys and investigations, combined with random agricultural inspections to help aid the improvement of our water environment.

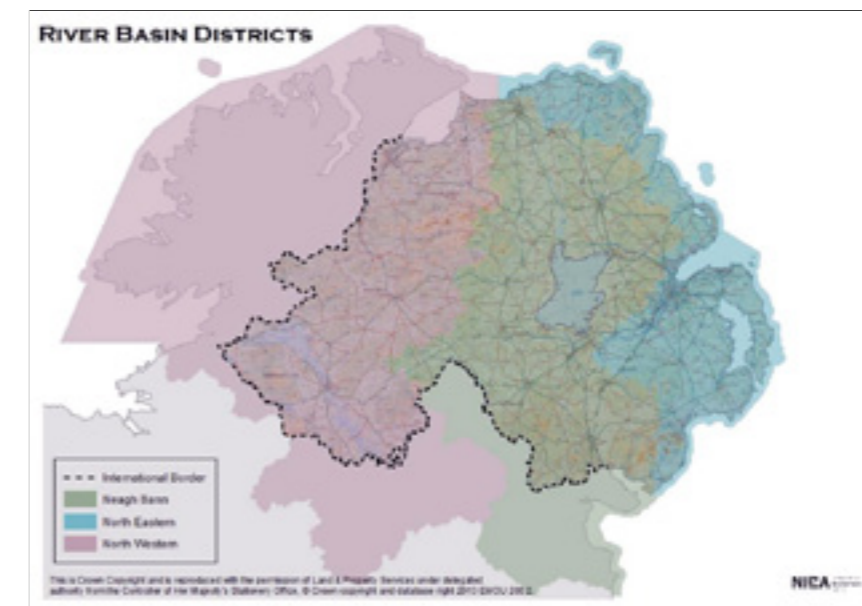
The Second Cycle Plans include additional agricultural measures to address diffuse and point source pollution from agriculture. These include, actions to improve water quality through the new Agri-environment scheme – the Environmental Farming Scheme and Nutrient Management Planning. There are also measures in the Second Cycle Plans to address factors that affect fish populations and habitats.

What more can be done?

Continued compliance by farmers with NAP and Phosphorus regulations will contribute to the improvements to our water environment. However, water management is something for which we all need to take responsibility. The best way to protect and improve the water environment is by everyone being actively involved.

You can get more involved and find out more about the River Basin District in your area by visiting the DAERA website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/delivery-and-public-participation. Here you will find specific information about each River Basin District as well as contact details for the catchment officer that oversees your District.

You can view the Second Cycle Plan for your river basin district on our website at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/water/river-basin-management and check the WFD status of your local rivers and lakes on the NIEA WFD webmapper at: maps.ehsni.gov.uk/wmuviewerplan2/



Water Framework Directive: Environmental Farming Scheme – Water Quality Measures

Siobhan Bowers, Environmental Farming Branch.

Agriculture has been identified as the major source of diffuse pollution to Northern Ireland’s rivers, lakes and groundwater. The main cause of agricultural pollution is nutrients, mostly phosphorus and nitrogen, arising from manures which are deposited by livestock or spread on land and chemical fertilisers. Sedimentation caused by livestock trampling riverbanks and fields is another significant problem and pesticide contamination is an issue in some areas. In isolation, individual sources of pollution at farm level can be small. However, on a catchment scale diffuse pollution can have a considerable cumulative effect on water quality.

Water Measures in the Environmental Farming Scheme

A new Agri-Environment Scheme - the Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) is planned to open in February 2017, subject to the necessary approvals. The EFS will offer farmers a five year agreement to deliver a range of environmental measures, including specific measures to protect and improve water quality. The EFS has three levels. A higher level which is primarily for environmentally designated sites. A wider level to deliver benefits across the countryside, outside of environmentally designated areas. A group level will also be introduced initially on a pilot basis. The group level aims to support co-operative action by farmers in specific areas such as a river catchment or environmentally designated site.

The water measures in the EFS are specifically designed to prevent direct nutrient run off and erosion to rivers through the creation of riparian buffer strips and fencing. These act as barriers to prevent livestock breaking down river banks. Riparian buffers also filter nutrients and slow the flow of surface run off, reducing the potential for nutrients and sediment to enter rivers and lakes. The vegetation that becomes established in riparian buffer strips also provides a valuable habitat to support bio-diversity.

Targeting of measures for greatest impact

The EFS water quality measures would be of benefit in all areas. However, the greatest impact can be gained in areas of intensive grassland where soil type, rainfall, ground conditions and the level of farming activity are most likely to lead to nutrient run off. High levels of phosphorus in soils and rivers that are already suffering from diffuse pollution are also risk factors. This is why there is specific targeting under the EFS to identify those areas of rivers most at risk from diffuse pollution from farm sources. These high risk areas are where maximum benefit will come from riparian buffer strips and fencing.

A series of EFS awareness raising sessions will be held in early 2017 prior to the scheme opening for applications. These will provide important information about the scheme. Dates and venues of these sessions will be publicised in the farming press.

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