



Foreword

Eric Long,
Head of Development Service, CAFRE.

I am pleased to introduce the ninth 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 but focuses primarily on Statutory Management Requirement 1 (SMR 1) Protection of Water against Nitrates pollution:

- Compliance with the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP).
- CAFRE Nutrient Calculators - Helping you work out the answers.

Forthcoming Events

Training for EU Exceptional Adjustment Aid (EU) 2016/1613 Soil Sampling and Analysis Scheme Participants

Participants in the Exceptional Adjustment Aid (EAA) Soil Sampling and Analysis Scheme will receive an invitation to attend a free training event at a local venue between January and March 2018.

Training will cover how to use your soil analysis report to plan lime, manure and fertiliser applications.

When you receive your invitation to training please respond early to book your place at your preferred venue.

- On-line submission of manure export forms - deadline 31 January 2018.
- Nitrates derogation
 - Questions you need to consider
 - Weighing up the options
 - A farmer's experience
 - How to apply on-line - deadline 1 March 2018.
- A calendar year for NAP and Phosphorus Regulations - dates to comply and take action by!

Save money on your water bills

Graham Smith, The Consumer Council.

The Consumer Council can help you to save money. Our free of charge water bill health check makes sure your farm or business is being billed correctly, and receiving all available allowances. We also provide advice on how you can make savings by using water more efficiently.

To date, our free water bill checks and complaint investigations have already returned over £1.2 million to Northern Ireland farms and businesses.

Recently, we have:

- Returned £4,500 to a farmer in Armagh after damage to their water meter;
- Saved a business in Comber £1,200 a year by making a simple water efficiency change; and
- Got a rebate of £1,500 for a farm in Fermanagh after reviewing its water charges.

To get your free water bill check call The Consumer Council on 028 9025 1600, or email a copy of your latest water bill to waterchampions@consumercouncil.org.uk

If you do not have access to your water bill you can register online with NI Water to get copies: <https://selfservice.niwater.com/Home/Business>

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Do you need more information on managing pesticides?

Leanne Harris, Environmental Farming Branch, DAERA.

Now is a good time to refresh your knowledge on how to use Plant Protection Products safely and more efficiently. You will then be well prepared for spraying next summer. The following information and documents will help you to protect your health and the environment and may



Information event on water and energy bills at Ballymena Mart. L to R is Ronan Convery, Consumer Council, Victor Chestnutt, UFU and Sam McNabney, Mart Manager.



help you reduce costs. You can find this information and download documents on the pesticides section of the DAERA website at: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/topics/plant-and-tree-health/pesticides-use-and-regulations

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.

Training, Assessment and Certification

If you are applying professional pesticides you must have an approved certificate of competence. Training, assessment and certification are available from a range of providers including CAFRE. The assessment for the certification must be completed by an assessor who is approved by either City and Guilds or Lantra.

A list of approved certificates is available at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/specified-certificates-recognised-under-plant-protection-products-sustainable-use

If you are not applying the pesticides yourself but using a contractor, you are responsible for ensuring the person applying them on your land has the necessary certificate of competence. This is a legal requirement under the Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012.

More information on training courses provided by CAFRE can be found at: www.cafre.ac.uk/industry-support/industry-training/agriculture-industry-training/

Sprayer Testing Equipment

From 26 November 2016 all pesticide sprayer application equipment must be tested and certified. To apply for a test, contact the National Sprayer Testing Scheme (NSTS) which is the approved provider for certification of pesticide application equipment in the UK. For more information and a useful operator check sheet visit www.nsts.org.uk/

Pesticide Product Label

The law requires that only authorised Plant Protection Products shall be sold, supplied, used, stored or advertised. It is the responsibility of all farmers and contractors to understand pesticide product labels and ensure that they only use pesticides at the correct rate and method.

Further information on understanding pesticide product labels can be found on the pesticides section of the DAERA website.

Integrated Pest Management (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. The implementation of IPM is a requirement under the Sustainable Use Directive and the application of IPM can save you money as well as reducing environmental impact. DAERA has produced an IPM Guide which is available at: www.daera-ni.gov.uk/integrated-pest-management

Other useful information on best practice can be found at:

Voluntary Initiative: www.voluntaryinitiative.org.uk/en/library

Compliance with the Nitrates Action Programme

Siobhan Bowers, Environmental Farming Branch, DAERA.

The measures in the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) promote efficient farming by encouraging best practice in managing manures and chemical fertilisers. The NAP aims to improve water quality by protecting our rivers, lakes and groundwater from nutrient pollution coming from agricultural sources.



The NAP is therefore the main agricultural measure for implementation of the Water Framework Directive which aims to achieve at least “good status” for all water bodies.

Results of 2016 on-farm inspections

Each year a number of farm businesses are inspected by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) to assess compliance with the NAP legislation. The results from 2016 NAP farm inspections continue to show that most farmers are complying with the NAP. Compliance remained at much the same levels as in 2015, which was a significant improvement on 2014.

There were three main issues identified in the 2016 inspections:

- Defective slurry storage and effluent facilities remained the most common non-compliance.
- This was closely followed by pollution caused mainly by poor farmyard management of slurry and silage effluent.
- In third place were issues arising from manure and fertiliser spreading.

Therefore, it is worth focussing on these issues to ensure your farm is not causing pollution and you are not at risk of a cross compliance breach and financial penalty.

Attention to detail

In many cases these are areas where much improvement can be achieved by a simple change in practice or by carrying out timely repairs. Make sure you check slurry and effluent transfer and storage facilities for leaks and defects regularly, especially in the run up to and during the closed spreading period.

However, when doing this, never ever enter a slurry 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.



Regularly check the storm water outfalls leaving your yard, drains and other watercourses on the farm. Ensure that they remain totally free from pollution. Also, it is important to continue doing these checks during the winter months as a contaminated drain or waterway may go unnoticed when there is no other reason to be in the fields.

170 kg Nitrogen per hectare limit

A key measure of the NAP is the 170 kg nitrogen per hectare per year limit on the application of livestock manure. The purpose of this limit is to prevent the over application of manure to land which can lead to water pollution. The nitrogen loading of a farm can be calculated from data on livestock numbers, land area and any manure imports/exports.

A significant number of more intensively stocked farms in NI are close to or above this limit. Unless a farm is operating under an approved derogation, exceeding the 170 kg Nitrogen per hectare per year limit is a breach of the NAP and Cross Compliance. Inspections will have an increasing focus on this issue, so make sure your farm is compliant. See the other articles in this issue about the Nitrates Derogation for additional information.

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 NAP 2015 – 2018 guidance book and the summary document is available on the DAERA website: [2015 2018 NAP and Phosphorus Guidance](#)

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Nitrates Derogation – 5 questions you need to consider

Gráinne McCarney, Crops and Sustainability Development Branch, CAFRE.

1. Do I need a Nitrates Derogation?

If you are an intensive grassland farmer with a Nitrogen (N) Loading above 170 kg nitrogen per hectare per year (kg N/ha/year), then the answer to that question is most definitely - **Yes!**

2. What does N Loading mean?

N loading is a key component of the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) and is a measure of stocking rate which has an upper farm limit of 170 kg N/ha/year from livestock manure. It is based on the nitrogen from the average number of livestock you keep on the farm over the year and the land area that you actively farm and also takes manure imports and exports into account.



Intensive grassland farmers should check their N Loading and if it is above the 170 kg N/ha/year limit apply for the Nitrates Derogation.

3. What is a Nitrates Derogation?

Intensive grassland farmers with a 'stocking rate' above the 170 kg N/ha/year limit can apply for the nitrates derogation to increase their N loading limit to 250 kg N/ha/year. This reduces the risk of a nitrates breach and also it allows their farm businesses to develop as planned.

The main requirements of the derogation are that farm businesses must:

- have at least 80% of their area as grassland;
- have a phosphorus balance of no more than 10 kg P/ha/year phosphorus per hectare per year;
- apply for the derogation to Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) each year by 1 March;
- submit a Fertilisation Account to NIEA each year by 1 March;
- prepare a Fertilisation Plan each year.

Therefore you will need to keep additional records and have a good administration system to ensure that important deadlines are not missed. When applying on-line, only information on the planned stocking rate for the year ahead and **not** from previous years is required.

4. Are there any other options available to me?

Yes there are other options. Exporting slurry, renting additional land and even decreasing livestock numbers are all ways to reduce N loading but they are expensive options and are only viable when the N Loading is just over the 170 kg N/ha/year limit. In addition Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI) research has shown that farms with high slurry exports can develop soil potash deficiency. Therefore, high levels of slurry exports could lead to reduced soil fertility.

More importantly, the alternative options can be restrictive to future development of your farm business. Operating under an approved Nitrates Derogation will allow your business to grow by allowing your herd size to increase, which is important when considering future viability and profitability.

5. What should I do now?

Check the position of your farm by:

1. Calculating the N Loading for your farm and,
2. Calculating the P Balance for your farm as derogated farms must have a P Balance under 10 kg P/ha/year.

To calculate N Loading and P Balance use the CAFRE Nutrient Calculators which are available at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/onlineservices. Use this information to help decide if the derogation is an option for your farm.

3. If you are close to or over 170 kg N/ha/year apply for a derogation for 2018.

To apply

Apply for a derogation on-line from 1 January 2018 at <https://apps.daera-ni.gov.uk/derogationapplication>. 1 March 2018 is the deadline for applications.

For further information click on:

[2015 2018 Nitrates Action Programme Guidance](#)
[2015 2018 Nitrates Directive Guidance](#)

The experience of a farmer with Nitrates Derogation

Zara Morrison, Dairy, Pigs and Poultry Development Branch, CAFRE.

Matthew Workman manages a dairy farm along with his father Dessie near Aghadowey. He currently milks 200 cows. The aim of the business has always been to maximise output from land available, and in the past they found it difficult to operate the business under the 170 kg N/ha/year Nitrogen Loading limit. In order to avoid the risk of penalties associated with breaching the Nitrates Action Programme Matthew successfully applied for nitrates derogation in 2008 and has operated comfortably within the higher limit of 250 kg N/ha/year since then.

The additional requirements of operating under derogation has caused minimal disruption to the business. Matthew has discovered that good technical efficiency of the dairy herd goes hand in hand with meeting Phosphorus (P) balance requirements. P balance is the difference between the amount of P entering and leaving the farm. Matthew achieves a P balance of 5.7 kg P/ha/year through excellent feed efficiency which is well inside the P balance limit of 10 kg P/ha/year.

The extra soil sampling requirements for farms operating under derogation have posed no problems to Matthew. The farm is soil sampled every four years as part of routine farm management so that nutrients can be targeted efficiently to the areas of greatest crop need. As a result of operating under derogation there is no requirement to export slurry off the farm therefore all slurry can be utilised to reduce fertiliser costs.



Over the years TB has been a major issue in the local farming area and as a result sometimes additional livestock have to be retained within the herd. The higher Nitrogen Loading limit within derogation has given Matthew useful flexibility to accommodate these extra livestock without fear of breaching the Nitrogen Loading limits.

Nitrates Derogation – weighing up the options

Jason McFerran & George Mathers, College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise, DAERA.

This article looks at the Nitrates Derogation and how it can help farmers develop their business and improve profitability.

“Nitrogen (N) Loading” is a key component in the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP) and is a measure of stocking rate which has an upper limit of 170 kg nitrogen per hectare per year (kg N/ha/year). Many farms that have a stocking rate above this limit have adopted different ways of lowering it through a combination of:

- Exporting slurry,
- Renting additional land,
- Reducing livestock numbers.

These are viable alternatives for reducing nitrogen loadings that are just over the 170 kg N/ha/year limit. However, they are increasingly expensive for higher nitrogen loadings and especially when it exceeds 200 kg N/ha/year as shown in the example later in this article. So what are the alternatives?

The Nitrates Derogation option

If you have an N loading above 170 kg N/ha/year you can apply for a nitrates derogation which will allow you to operate up to a limit of 250 kg N/ha/year. The derogation is available if you keep cattle and sheep, but in practice it mainly applies to intensive dairy farms. You need to apply annually for this derogation and keep additional records. The deadline for applications this year is 1st March 2018.

Example - looking at different options for an intensive dairy farm

You are a dairy farmer keeping 100 dairy cows, twenty five 1 - 2 year old heifers and twenty five 0 - 1 year old heifer calves on 46 ha of eligible land. The average quantity of milk sold per cow per year is 7600 litres and the cows are fed an average of 2.4 tonnes of concentrates per year plus an additional 25 tonnes for young stock.

The nitrogen loading for this farm is calculated at 234 kg N/ha/year and the phosphate (P) balance is 8.8 kg P/ha/year using a phosphorus content of 4.8 kg P/tonne for the concentrate inputs.

There are a number of ways you could meet the NAP requirements in this example.

1. Apply each year for a Nitrates Derogation

Apply for the nitrates derogation by 1st March each year and you can continue to operate with the same levels of livestock and area of land used. You need to keep additional records comprising a Fertilisation Plan and a Fertilisation Account. You can keep these records yourself or you can employ a consultant to help with the records. You should allow an approximate cost of £200-£300 for your own time or a consultant's fee. Your farm must have at least 80% of the agricultural area in grassland and have a phosphorus balance of no more than 10 kg P/ha/year to be eligible for derogation. Up to 5% of derogation farms are inspected each year.

2. Export slurry

To reduce the nitrogen loading to 166 kg N/ha/year 1200 m³ (264,000 gallons) of slurry needs to be exported. This is over 60% of the slurry produced by the herd and it would cost over £3600 to replace this slurry with chemical fertiliser. This cost does not include the cost of transporting the slurry to other farms, which could be substantial. Records of slurry exports must be submitted to NIEA each year by 31 January for the previous year.

3. Renting additional land

An additional 19 ha (47.5 acres) of land would be needed to reduce the nitrogen loading to 165 kg N/ha/year. The additional cost of renting this land at £250/ha (£100/acre) would be £4750 but could be much higher in many cases. Suitable land may not be available nearby, and additional transport costs must also be considered.

4. Reducing livestock numbers

You would need to cut livestock numbers by 30% to reduce the Nitrogen Loading to 165 kg N/ha/year. This could mean a reduction of 30% in sales of milk. The fall in profitability would probably be greater than 30% as many fixed costs would not reduce in proportion to the reduced herd size.

Conclusion

In this example, applying for a nitrates derogation is the most cost effective option to meet the regulations. Many farmers are currently not applying for the derogation but taking alternative approaches to meet the nitrogen loading limit. You need to consider how you want to see your farm business develop in the



future as the nitrates derogation does allow farms to grow by allowing herd size to increase. This is an important consideration when considering a farm business's future viability and profitability. As previously stated if you apply for the nitrates derogation you will need to keep additional records and have a good administration system to ensure that important deadlines are not missed.

If you need a nitrates derogation in 2018 you must apply on-line at apps.daira-ni.gov.uk/derogationapplication on or before 1 March 2018.

Late applications will not be accepted.

Farmers to benefit from new Nitrates Derogation application process

Oonagh McCann, Water Management Unit, NIEA.

The Nitrates Derogation is vital to Northern Ireland and subject to meeting certain criteria, which are designed to protect our environment, it allows farmers to operate more efficiently as well as more intensively. Operating under a derogation allows farmers to operate to a higher N Loading limit of 250 kg N/ha/year, compared to the usual limit of 170 kg N/ha/year limit, meaning they are able to keep more animals and maximise the use of nutrients on their farm without the need to export slurry.

Based on available information that the NIEA holds on farm businesses in Northern Ireland, it is estimated that there are over 2,000 farmers who could benefit from operating under a Nitrates Derogation, yet last year there were only 310 successful applicants.



The Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) is introducing a new on-line application process for farmers wishing to apply for a Nitrates Derogation in 2018 and is taking this opportunity to encourage more applications. This year the application process has been simplified and it has been designed to rule out errors which will reduce the number of applications refused. The on-line application process will only require information on the planned stocking rate for the year ahead (2018) and will **not** require details from previous years to be input. Farmers will be notified immediately if their application has been successful and they will be able to keep a copy of the application for their records.

Under the new process applications should be made on-line from 1 January 2018 at appsdaera-ni.gov.uk/derogationapplication. The deadline for applications is 1 March 2018.

Farmers considering the Nitrates Derogation should seek further advice from their adviser, farming organisation or agricultural consultant to help determine whether they are eligible to apply for a derogation.

CAFRE Nutrient Calculators – Helping you work out the answers!

Gráinne McCarney, Crops and Sustainability Development Branch, CAFRE.

The CAFRE nutrient calculators can help you answer some important questions about your farm business with regard to compliance with the Nitrates Action Programme (NAP).

What nutrients am I getting from slurry?

What is the Nitrogen Loading for my farm?

What is the Phosphorus Balance for my farm?

Am I above the 170 kg N/ha /year limit?

Do I have the records I need?

Am I applying the right type and rate of fertiliser?

Do I have enough slurry storage on the farm?

Do I need to apply for a Nitrates Derogation?

DAERA Online Services

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Online Services Home > CAFRE Nutrient Calculators

CAFRE nutrient calculators

There are five CAFRE 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 applying under a derogation for 350kg 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 NMP limit.
- Crop nutrient calculator**
Helps you to comply with nutrient limits 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, dry manure production and current storage capacity for your farm.

Help and advice

- Support for other Online Services
- How to access Online Services
- How to complete SAF Online
- Browsers/devices support for GSAA
- APRIS training in your area
- DAERA Mobile Apps
- Online Agents

More information

- Visit nidirect
- Visit daera-ni.gov.uk
- Contact DAERA

Contact us

Helpline: 028 9442 6699
(Monday to Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm)
Email: online.services@daera-ni.gov.uk

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Dundonald House, Upper Newtownards Road, Belfast BT4 3SB

The five calculators will not just help you comply with the NAP nutrient limits, but they can also help you to:

- make complex calculations and record keeping easier;
- improve soil fertility and crop yields;
- make potential savings on chemical fertiliser; and
- improve water quality.

Get on-line today and work out if you are complying with NAP nutrient limits!

To date over 4,000 farmers have used the farm nutrient calculators. If you would like to start using the calculators, register today at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/onlineservices

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NIEA introduces new on-line submission of manure export forms and fertilisation accounts for 2018

Oonagh McCann, Water Management Unit, NIEA.

NIEA is introducing a new system for the on-line submission of records for manure export forms and fertilisation accounts from January 2018. The new system will make it easier and quicker for farmers, or their agents, to submit records while at the same time reducing the risk of errors and hence potential penalties being applied to the Basic Payments.

There will be two separate web-links, one for the submission of manure export records on non-derogated farms and another for the submission of fertilisation accounts (and manure export records) for those farm businesses that have been operating under an approved derogation in 2017. The derogation application and fertilisation accounts will sit separately to the Government Gateway on the DAERA website.

On-line submission of manure export records

The on-line process for completion and submission of manure export records for 2017 will be available from 1 January 2018: www2.dardni.gov.uk/exportmanurecalculator/default.aspx. This facility will sit alongside the CAFRE Nutrient Calculators which farmers are already familiar with and use to calculate their nitrogen loading and storage capacity. Under the new process farmers or their advisers should prepare their manure export records for 2017 and submit these on-line by midnight 31 January 2018.

On-line submission of fertilisation accounts

For those farms operating under an approved derogation for the calendar year 2017, the annual fertilisation account will now also be submitted on-line. This will be operational from 1 January 2018 at apps.d.aera-ni.gov.uk/fertilisationaccount. Under the new process farmers or their advisers should prepare their fertilisation accounts and manure export records from derogated farms and submit these on-line by midnight 1 March 2018.

DAERA's experience has shown that the submission of records on-line will mean that the process is easier for farmers and their agents and that the number of errors and potential breaches is vastly reduced. However, if farmers have any concerns they should seek further advice from CAFRE, their farming organisation or agricultural consultant if they have any issues around the on-line submission of information.

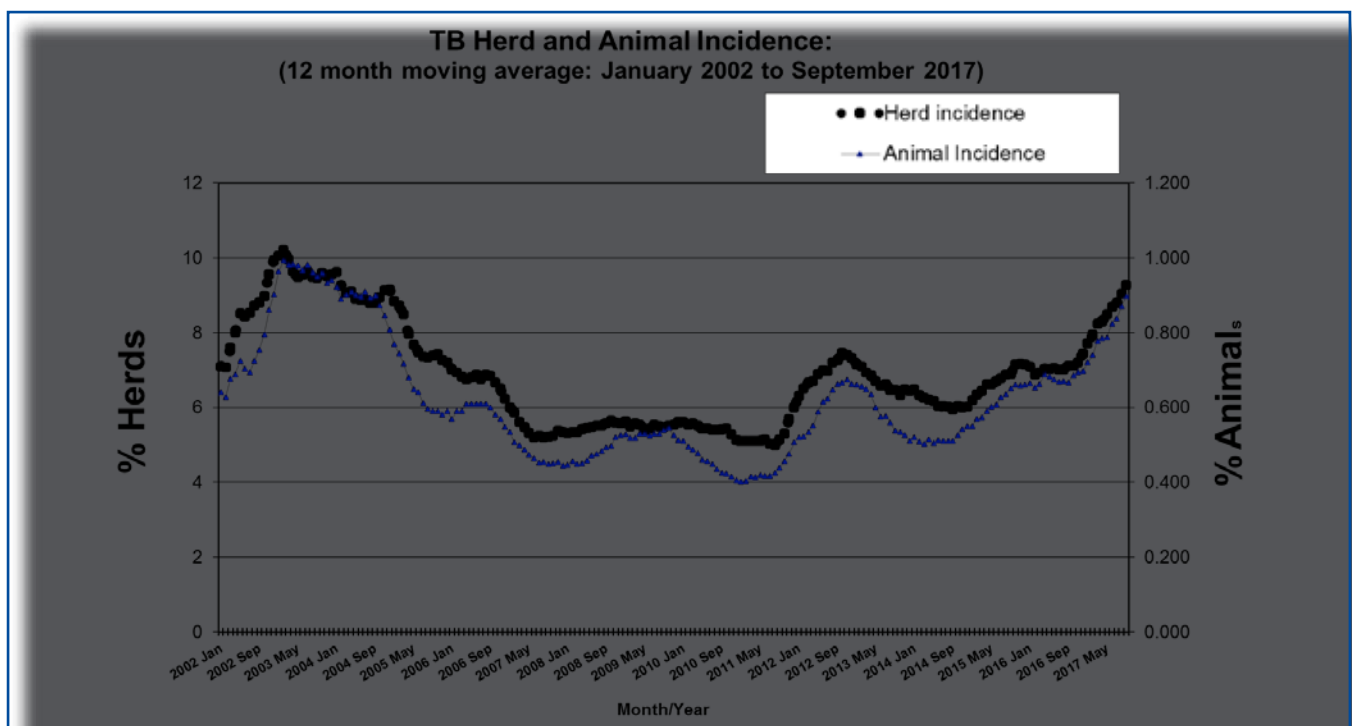
Bovine TB - The current rise in TB across Northern Ireland is very concerning. It is disrupting farm businesses, causing stress and financial loss to herd keepers and placing pressure on DAERA's budget.

David Kyle, TB Programme, Veterinary Service, DAERA.

This article outlines the serious risk of TB affecting herds in Northern Ireland and provides an update on additional measures being deployed to tackle the rise.

Current update

TB herd incidence levels have been rising over the last six years but recently there has been a very sharp rise to levels last reached in 2004. The chart below shows the disease trends at herd and animal level from January 2002 until May 2017. To put the situation into context, in the 12 month period to September 2017 (our most recent figures at time of going to press), 15,559 TB reactor animals were removed in Northern Ireland. This is an increase of 37% on the previous 12 month period. This scenario is unprecedented in recent times. The scale of the increase does not represent a "normal" pattern for this disease and at present DAERA understands the position to be a combination of both a probable rise in disease combined with a significant improvement to detect and remove infected animals.



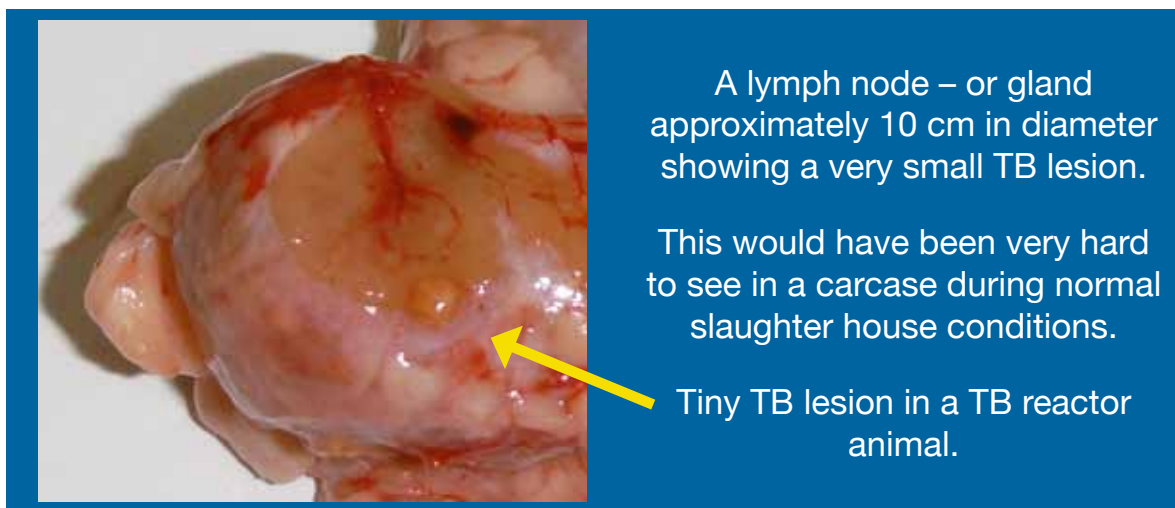
In response DAERA has been considering the position carefully. We will be deploying a range of additional cattle measures. These new measures are designed to remove more infected animals as early as possible and provide more assurance that herds are clear of infection after de-restriction.

In addition, we have also decided to undertake Badger bTB Detection Surveys in two potential areas. These surveys will help inform any future wildlife policies.

New cattle measures

DAERA welcomed The TB Strategic Partnership Group's (TBSPG) Report in December 2016. It recognised that tackling the problem of bovine TB in Northern Ireland required a holistic approach which dealt with all aspects of disease spread. In the face of the current increase DAERA has decided that it is vital that they introduce some new measures which will help tackle the disease. These measures are in line with some of the TBSPG recommendations. These additional cattle measures include:

- Treating herds as confirmed outbreaks when they have more than one reactor regardless of subsequent post-mortem and laboratory test results. This measure is in line with the approach in other regions affected with TB. It makes sense as we know that the chance of a false positive reaction to the skin test at the moment is very low and the chance of having two false positive animals is even lower. This change may increase the number of herd tests required before de-restriction. It will also have further effect by increasing the actions the Department takes to investigate the potential source of infection.



- Removing animals in break down herds which show smaller reactions to the TB test. We are doing this because these animals have a high probability of being infected with bovine TB, especially when there is such a high level of disease in Northern Ireland.
- Introducing a further herd test for certain herds after restrictions are lifted following a breakdown. Instead of the current requirement of one Check Herd Test (CHT) six months after de-restriction, herds will have two CHTs at six monthly intervals, before returning to annual herd testing in the absence of additional risk factors. We are doing this because there is a high risk of residual infection in herds once they have been exposed to disease and at present a high percentage of CHTs reveal reactors.
- Conducting a study to determine how long it takes skin swellings in reactor cattle to reduce in normal situations - and how the Interferon Gamma blood test correlates in these animals with the measurements seen. Around 1000 reactor animals will be used for this study which will take place in Newry, Newtownards and Enniskillen areas. We are doing this so that in future we will be more certain that the animals we remove have given a genuine reaction to tuberculin.

With these new measures, it is likely that more animals will be removed in the short term but these additional measures will reduce TB in the longer term.

Badger surveys

DAERA recognises that badgers can play a role in the maintenance and spread of infection in cattle.

DAERA is currently carrying out a scientific research study called the “Test and Vaccinate or Remove” (TVR) Study. This study involves the capture and testing of badgers in an area of County Down. Badgers that test positive are removed and badgers that test negative are vaccinated and released. This study began in 2014 and will finish in late 2018 when a scientific review will be completed.

In November 2017, DAERA also carried out two new badger TB Detection Surveys in Aghadowey and Omagh. In each area, 19 badgers were captured and blood tested. Those that tested negative were vaccinated and released and those that tested positive were removed for laboratory examination. The information gathered during these surveys will help inform potential future wildlife intervention policies.



Cattle are often attracted to badger setts, which could be a source of infection to cattle.

Using fencing to keep cattle back is good practice and can be done legally provided there is no interference with the sett or access to them by badgers.

Please note badgers are a protected species. It is a criminal offence to interfere with these animals and their setts. However, there are some good practice measures that you can take to protect your herd. Further information can be found on the DAERA website at:

www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dard/tb-wildlife-biosecurity-leaflet.pdf

TB Consultation – your views matter

In 2014, a TB Strategic Partnership Group (TBSPG) was established to develop a long term strategy to eradicate TB from the cattle population in Northern Ireland. The TBSPG published its TB Eradication Strategy and Implementation Action Plan in December 2016. Its comprehensive report contained 38 recommendations across seven key themes, including wildlife, finance and tools and processes. The Department recently launched a consultation on its response to the TBSPG Strategy. Copies of the TBSPG report and the DAERA consultation can be found on the DAERA website - www.daera-ni.gov.uk/

Introducing the Biosecurity Questionnaire

Andrew Doyle, TB Programme, Veterinary Service, DAERA.

By taking appropriate remedial action to improve biosecurity it should be possible to protect a farm better from a range of diseases and not just TB. In many cases there are management changes that can directly benefit the farm and improve its future profitability.

Since November 2017, as part of the service private vets provide to DAERA for farmers who keep cattle, vets will be discussing the new biosecurity self-assessment checklist. This checklist is designed to help farmers identify and implement biosecurity improvements on their farm.

Initially this will probably be done at the time of the annual herd TB test - which is also a good opportunity to review general herd health. Some herd keepers might find it more appropriate to complete this checklist at a different time.

This tool is an aide memoire to help you and your private vet discuss and consider how best to protect your herd against important disease risks.

The results of this assessment will not be made available to DAERA.

The conversation we hope will be an honest dialogue between you and your vet - the more thorough the discussion, the more you will benefit.

As a guide, "Best Practice" for each area of disease risk is shown in the next page with the sample questionnaire. Few, if any farms in Northern Ireland, will be conforming fully to the Best Practice descriptor however it is well recognised in Northern Ireland that at times of serious threat - such as with Foot and Mouth disease in 2001 - huge efforts and improvements are made to farm behaviours and farm biosecurity.

By recognising where weaknesses exist and improvements can be made, it is hoped that farms can become more efficient and profitable. The questionnaire/assessment is designed so that most typical farms will achieve a median score of 3 in each area. Only exceptional farms are likely to score a 4 or 5 - but this is the standard of biosecurity required to optimise herd health.

Please contact your local veterinary practice to discuss this initiative further.

Sample of Best Practice Notes

Full guidance notes for each individual Score can be found at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/tb-testing-services and click on Biosecurity questionnaire – guidance notes. Best practice (Score 5) is described below.

Full guidance notes for each individual Score can be found at www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/tb-testing-services. Best practice (Score 5) is described below.

Factor	Best Practice
1. Herd Size.	Herd size has a linear effect on disease incidence - top score is no more than 20 cattle in each distinct and maintained epidemiological group.
2. Cattle Identification (All Disease control requires accurate tracing).	Legal requirements are ensured with accurate herd records. 100% identification certainty is maintained. A parallel management system of identification exists alongside the mandatory requirements e.g. freeze branding. In particular the keeper maintains traceability to ensure progeny and breeding stock are paired and correct (not random registration). All births, movements and deaths are recorded immediately.
3. Moves in.	A truly closed herd. No purchases, no returns from shows or markets (non-sale).
4. Farm boundaries (Quality of fencing, mixing of herds).	Stock proof, wide double fencing (or equivalent) between all land owned or taken and other fields containing livestock so as to ensure no contact between cattle in different herds.
5. Out farms.	No out farms used for grazing cattle. No associated herds.
6. Rented Land.	No rented land and therefore no "after grazing" of rented silage ground by cattle.
7. Badgers and deer awareness.	No badgers or deer on farm or in locality. Keeper confident in the identification of badger setts and latrines and has actively surveyed.
8. Badger and deer interface.	Badgers or deer not present on farm or in locality at all times.
9. Visitors (Vets, farm workers, contractors etc.).	No outside help. Requirements for emergency strategies exist for routine health care, strategies for all visitors in contact with animals. Regularly reviewing disease outbreak.
10. Cleansing and disinfection (C+D).	Farm machinery is Cleaned and Disinfected Personnel C+D immediately between different batches of cattle. C+D is maintained at the correct frequency.
11. Exotic disease (Diseases not present in N. Ireland e.g. Bluetongue, FMD).	Keeper has up to date knowledge of risks of exotic disease and required actions if suspected. Strict movement policies ensuring no movement of stock from NI. Controls risk from feed, vermin, wildlife. Factors outside the control of the keeper.
12. Major Endemic disease (e.g. BVD, JD, IBR).	Strict closed herd policies. Quarantine and suspect disease situations. Herd health participation in farmer awareness groups, disease strategies.
13. Other Endemic disease affecting the herd.	Routine Herd Health consultancy with a Veterinarian. Ensure correct use of preventative pharmaceuticals, ectoparasiticides, vaccines, antibiotics. Record disease using feedback from abattoir/crematorium surveillance initiatives (e.g. calf pneumonia, including liver fluke).
14. TB Testing (Attitude and effort).	Best practice is not determined by presence of disease but by attitude and effort to ensure best testing facilities for cattle handling and are done on time and to the highest standards.

Data recorded using this questionnaire is for use of the veterinarian and the herd keeper only and is not to be shared.

Form for use by Approved Veterinary Surgeons when carrying out a TB herd test.

Herd Keeper:	Herd No.	Date: / /	AVS:				
Business model (Dairy, Suckler, Finisher, Rearer, Mixed, Other specify _____)							
Area	Q	Biosecurity Focus	Score				
			5	4	3	2	1
Cattle	1	Herd Size	My herd size is:				
			≤ 20	21 to 70	71 to 300	301 to 800	>800
	2	Identification	I maintain 100% certainty of identification.				
Land	3	Moves in (including returns)	I maintain strict isolation of my cattle from any other cattle and do not purchase any stock.				
	4	Farm boundaries	When grazing, my cattle come into contact with animals from other herds (through poor boundary or mixing of herds).				
	5	Out farms	My farm uses which number of out farms?				
Wildlife	6	Rented land	As part of my farming practice, I need to rent land...				
	7	Badgers and deer awareness	I am confident I would know if badgers and/or deer were on or near my farm.				
	8	Badgers and deer interface	I address potential for direct or indirect cattle-wildlife contact (wildlife access to housing, feed, troughs; cattle access to setts, latrines).				
People	9	Visitors (e.g. Vets, Farm workers, Contractors)	I actively manage to reduce the risk posed by visitors bringing disease onto my farm.				
	10	Cleansing & disinfection (Houses, Yard, Machinery)	I realise the importance in disease control of keeping facilities and equipment clean. I disinfect them on a regular basis after use.				
	11	Exotic diseases	I am conscious of the risk of Exotic disease and take active measures to avoid risks.				
Disease	12	Major endemic diseases (e.g. BVD, Johnes, IBR, Leptospirosis)	I rate my attitude to and knowledge of the major diseases occurring regularly in NI as:				
	13	Other endemic diseases	I would describe my attitude to and knowledge of production disease as:				
	14	TB testing	I see the TB test as:				
			Opportunity to improve herd health + profitability	Important to maintain herd health	A necessary inconvenience	Inconvenience to get done as soon as possible	Irrelevant
			Total Score				

Sample of Questionnaire

This is completed by private vets in consultation with the farmers.

Statutory Management Requirement 4 (SMR 4) Food and Feed Law – use of veterinary medicines

Arron Wright, Agri-food Inspection Branch, DAERA.

Veterinary medicines can be a costly but necessary input in livestock farming. Used in conjunction with good management, housing, hygiene and nutrition veterinary medicines are an important tool in ensuring the health and welfare of livestock and the profitability of farm businesses. Abuse of medicines however can have huge implications far beyond the farm gate with the potential to undermine markets for our produce, increase waste in the supply chain and adversely impact human and animal health.

Anti-microbial resistance is one of the biggest challenges facing humanity and as a major user of anti-microbials the agri-food industry has a lead role to play in tackling this problem. In an interview shortly after winning the Nobel Prize in 1945 for discovering penicillin, Sir Alexander Fleming predicted not only how useful antibacterial drugs would be, but how dangerous a world without them could be, stating:

“The thoughtless person playing with penicillin treatment is morally responsible for the death of the man who succumbs to infection with the penicillin-resistant organism.”

Although Fleming was referring to penicillin his warning applies equally to all anti-microbial treatments.

Food and feed law places a responsibility on all those in the food supply chain to act with integrity in the production and manufacture of food. A number of regulations specifically refer to the use of veterinary medicines (not just anti-microbials) and the recording of this use. Examples of these requirements can be seen in EC Regulation 852/2004, Annex 1 which include:

In Part II paragraph 3(a)

...food business operators (farmers and processors) are to comply with appropriate Community and national legislative provisions relating to the **control of hazards in primary production** and associated operations, including: **measures to control contamination arising from** the air, soil, water, feed, fertilizers, **veterinary medicinal products** ...

Paragraph 4(j) goes on to say

...Food business operatorsproducing primary products of animal origin are to take adequate measures as appropriate: to use feed additives and **veterinary medicinal products correctly**, as required by the relevant legislation.



And Part III, paragraph 8(b) states

Food business operators... producing primary products of animal origin are, in particular, to keep records on: **veterinary medicinal products or other treatments administered** to animals, dates of administration and withdrawal periods;

This is not an exhaustive list of legislative references to veterinary medicines but it does indicate clearly the importance placed on their use. Other more specific regulations apply to particular livestock enterprises and it is important to be familiar with those that impact upon your business.

Key points to remember:

- Only use veterinary medicines approved for use in the UK.
- Only treat animals for which the medicine has been prescribed/approved for use.
- Use the correct dose rate.
- Observe withdrawal periods following treatment.
- Keep a clear record of the animal/group treated, the treatment used (and batch number), date of use, who administered the treatment and appropriate withdrawal periods.

The link below gives you record templates for veterinary medicines and other areas for which records are required.

www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/templates-required-records-animal-food-and-feed-hygiene

Whether identified through inspection or sampling and testing programmes, the inappropriate use of medicines or presence of residues in food products could result in enforcement action being taken. It may also be referred as a breach of the Statutory Management Requirement for Feed and Food Law and incur penalties to area-based scheme support payments including Basic Payment.

Most importantly, if you have any concern that produce from your farm may contain residues do not let it enter the food chain. **If in doubt, keep it out.**

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Discover CAFRE Open Days Spring 2018

Loughry Campus

Tuesday 17th April 2018, 3 – 8 pm

Greenmount Campus

Wednesday 18th April, 3 – 8 pm

Enniskillen Campus

Saturday 21st April, 12 noon

Environmental Farming Scheme

Joanne Dale, Countryside Management Delivery Branch, DAERA.

Please ensure you are aware of the Environmental Farming Scheme (EFS) requirements so that you can complete the appropriate work. All EFS information is available on the webpage. Keeping field records is a compulsory requirement for the EFS. The required information is detailed in the EFS Information Sheets under 'Requirements and Controls'. DAERA have field record sheets available for the Higher and Wider Levels of the Scheme or, if you wish, you may use your own preferred format.

Higher Level:

1. Open for applications in February 2018

Targeted at agricultural land that is within environmentally designated sites or contains priority habitats or species.



2. If you have received an EFS Higher Level agreement please ensure you read and understand it before you accept.

Wider Level:

1. Complete training for the Wider Level Options

You must complete the on-line training for the Options for which you have an Agreement. This is necessary for us to process your payment. The on-line training contains key information to help you complete your EFS options to the required standard.

2. Order your hedging plants and trees

Given the seasonal nature of hedge and tree planting, you are recommended to order any hedging plants and/or trees that you intend to plant during the 2017/18 planting season now.

3. Open for applications August 2018

Delivering benefits across the wider countryside outside of environmentally designated areas.