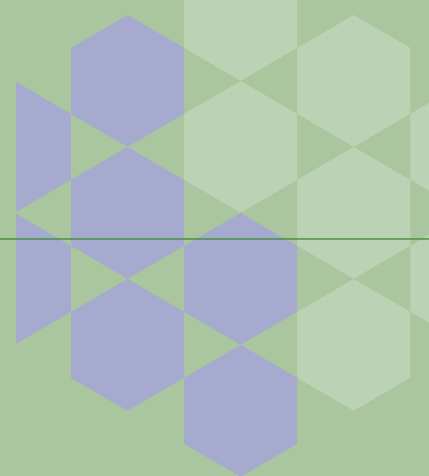


# Bulletin

## Helping You Comply



June 2008

Issue 2

### Dr. Sam Kennedy, CAFRE Deputy Director

I am pleased to introduce the second edition of our twice yearly publication 'Helping You Comply'.

This bulletin, which is part of the NI Farm Advisory System, aims to help farmers keep up to date with various aspects of Cross-Compliance.

This issue has two main themes which are:

- Feedback from the 2006 Cross-Compliance Inspections.
- Update on aspects of Cross-Compliance relevant to this time of year.

### Feedback from 2006 Cross-Compliance Inspections

The results of the Cross-Compliance inspection programme show that in 2006 the main causes of Cross-Compliance breaches fell into the following 3 areas:

1. Identification and registration of bovine animals (SMRs 7 & 8).
2. Soil management (GAEC 1).
3. Protection of groundwater against pollution (SMR 3).

While I encourage you to ensure that you comply with all aspects of the Cross-Compliance standards that are relevant to your business, these results show that particular care and attention are needed in these three areas.

To help you understand the requirements of each of these areas this bulletin contains articles by Brendan McCartan on 'cattle identification and registration' and Keith Johnston which covers the relevant aspects of 'soil management and protection of groundwater against pollution'.



### Aspects of Cross-Compliance relevant to this time of year

I appreciate that the summer period is often a time when you wish to carry out field and hedge maintenance. This can range from cutting a hedge to more extensive operations. Keith Johnston's second article highlights a number of these areas and advises on what is permissible under Cross-Compliance.

In addition, you may be spraying crops and while this may range from spot spraying a few thistles or docks to applying fungicide and growth regulators to arable crops both operations come under Cross-Compliance Statutory Management Requirement (SMR) 10. Robin Bolton's article 'Cross-Compliance and Pesticides – Helping You Comply' draws out the key areas that should be borne in mind when using pesticides.

Publications on Cross-Compliance are available on our website [www.dardni.gov.uk](http://www.dardni.gov.uk)

In addition Cross-Compliance information on the RuralNI website has been revised by Grainne McCarney and is available on [www.ruralni.gov.uk](http://www.ruralni.gov.uk)

# Common Veterinary Breaches of Cross-Compliance

**Brendan McCartan, Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer (Acting)**

This article highlights the most common veterinary breaches detected on NI farms from Cross-Compliance inspections carried out in the past 2 years.

## 1. Cattle identification – cattle not tagged

It is a legal requirement that all calves must have their birth registered within 27 days of being born. You can use your computer to connect to APHIS Online through the DARD RuralNI website\*. This allows registration to occur at a time which suits you and can be easily checked. If registration is delayed and is posted close to the 27 day limit there is an increased risk of a late notification status which will prevent the calf from leaving the farm.

Always put in two ear tags in case one of them is lost. It is illegal to have cattle that have not been registered or tagged. These cattle cannot enter the food chain and will result in a considerable financial loss.

\* If you would like to start using APHIS Online to access your herd records:

- a. visit the RuralNI website ([www.ruralni.gov.uk](http://www.ruralni.gov.uk)),
- b. select **New User? - Sign up** now at top left side of home page),
- c. follow the on screen instructions to sign up.

Your details will be verified and a portal ID and password will be issued in 5 - 7 days.

## 2. Poor herd records

This is the most common breach detected at farm inspections. However, it is a legal requirement to keep your herd records up to date.

- It is good practice to complete your herd records using either a paper based herdbook or a commercial computer program 'at the time', that is, when cattle are tagged, moved off the farm or die.

- Records can be used for management purposes. Good records allow the assessment of herd fertility and can highlight a slip in calving index. In addition, good records aid management when sending cattle for sale or slaughter.
- If a tag has been lost and needs to be re-ordered, having accurate records will help speed up this process.

## Herd Records and Farm Quality Assurance

Herd records are also an essential part of the Farm Quality Assurance Scheme (FQAS) which states:

'On farm records as required by legislation must be kept, must be constantly updated and must be available for inspection at any reasonable time and be reconcilable with DARD Animal and Public Health Information System (APHIS) and with the relevant animals on the ground'.

As NI seeks to re-establish itself in the European beef market it is important that as many quality cattle as possible are marketed under FQAS. This is a real incentive for you to adhere to the cattle identification requirements.

By following these guidelines you could dramatically reduce the number of breaches that arise through problems with cattle identification and the associated records.



# Breaches relating to the Protection of the Environment

Keith Johnston, Senior Countryside Management Adviser, Co. Tyrone

In 2006, the two most common environmental breaches were:

1. Soil management (GAEC 1).
2. Protection of Groundwater against Pollution (SMR 3).

## 1. Soil Management - Prevent land from becoming severely poached (GAEC 1).

Trampling of land by livestock can be a problem especially in poor weather. Severe poaching increases the risk of soil and nutrient run-off especially when combined with animal manures, resulting in poor water quality.

Signs of severe trampling include:

- no visible remains of grass or vegetation;
- deep bare soil trenches caused by vehicle tracks;
- bare soil frequently mixed with livestock manure; and
- waterlogged soils and livestock wading in muck.



Fields poached to this extent breach the soil management element of Cross-Compliance

Livestock should be managed according to the ground and weather conditions to ensure run-off does not occur. Remove livestock from any area which starts to show signs of severe trampling.

Some areas of riverbanks may be prone to trampling by livestock. If this is likely to lead to soil erosion the area should be fenced off.

Supplementary feeding sites should be sited on dry fields or on hardcore areas where possible. This can include laneways. These sites should be regularly rotated. Although this time of the year is not normally associated with livestock poaching, use the summer months to plan for the autumn and winter grazing management.

## 2. The Protection of Groundwater against Pollution (SMR3).

If spent sheep dip or excess pesticides are applied to land a Groundwater Authorisation is required.

Typically a Groundwater Authorisation will include the following conditions:

- Spread on authorised land at least 10 metres from a surface waterway (rivers, streams or open drains) and at least 50 metres from any spring or borehole.
- No spreading on land that is liable to flooding or is frozen hard or snow covered.
- No spreading on land which is free draining, steeply sloping, water logged or has cracked soil.
- Make sure that sheep dips are well constructed and maintained to prevent leaks.
- Remember to keep records of the land disposal of these materials.

Further information on Cross-Compliance can be obtained by contacting Countryside Management Branch at your local DARD office.

To obtain a Groundwater Authorisation or for further information on the Groundwater Regulations, contact Environment and Heritage Service (EHS), Water Management Unit  
Tel: 028 9263 3463.

### Cross-Compliance and Pesticides – Helping You Comply

Robin Bolton, Crops Development Adviser, CAFRE



Arable farmer, Thomas Forgrave, is pictured adding pesticide concentrate to his sprayer while wearing correct protective clothing

As part of Cross-Compliance our inspectors will be checking compliance with SMR 10 – Placing of Plant Protection Products on the Market. This SMR covers how you use pesticides on land under your control.

Pesticides is a generic term used to cover all herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides.

#### 1. In order to comply only apply approved pesticides (sprays).

Approved pesticides should be marked with a MAPP number (or possibly the older MAFF number). It is possible that some pesticides may have an approval number, but may have been withdrawn from use by their manufacturer. If you are unsure if a pesticide is still approved you should check with your supplier.

#### 2. Follow the recommendations on the pesticide label.

This will include dose rate, application rate, approval for use on the correct crop and harvest intervals to be adhered to.

#### 3. Make sure that the person spraying is competent.

Any person born after 31 December 1964 must hold a Certificate of Competence to apply pesticides. If you employ a contractor to apply pesticides on your land, make sure that they hold the appropriate certificates of competence to spray (usually PA1 and PA2 for tractor mounted sprayers and PA6 for knapsack sprayer). Other types of specialist pesticide application equipment may require specific PA certificates.

For details of Pesticide Application courses to acquire the Certificate of Competence, contact Charlene Graffin, CAFRE, Greenmount Campus, 028 9442 6704.

#### 4. Make sure that the sprayer is maintained in good condition.

The sprayer should be in good working order fitted with the appropriate nozzles and have a working pressure gauge.

#### 5. Wear suitable protective clothing when measuring out the pesticide.

Follow the recommendations about protective clothing on the label when spraying. The minimum protective clothing is, waterproof footwear, a pesticide resistant suit, nitrile gloves (0.5mm thick 300mm long) and a faceshield, however, the pesticide label may recommend additional protective clothing, which should be worn.

**6. Make sure that you follow good practice when applying the pesticide to reduce spray drift and observe buffer zones.**

Ensure that spray drift does not enter watercourses or damage other crops or hedges.

**7. Keep a record of all pesticide applications.**

Maintain a record of all pesticides used on your farm. Inspectors will want to see these records to check if pesticides are being used correctly. The record should include details of the field site, crop treated, the product used, its application rate and dilution, date and duration of spraying operation as well as weather conditions and any other relevant information.

**8. Keep all pesticides in a proper store.**

The store must be locked, dry, protected from frost, well ventilated and capable of containing any spillage and leakage from the stored pesticide containers. An up-to-date stock record should be maintained and kept away from the store.

For further information and advice, please contact the HSENI helpline on 0800 0320121 or their website at [www.hseni.gov.uk](http://www.hseni.gov.uk).

## RuralNI Helping You Comply

Grainne McCarney, Environmental Training Project Adviser

Would you like more information on Cross-Compliance? If yes, log on to RuralNI website at [www.ruralni.gov.uk](http://www.ruralni.gov.uk). RuralNI is the gateway to electronic information and services for NI farmers and growers and now includes a section devoted to all aspects of Cross-Compliance.

The Cross-Compliance information can be accessed by clicking on the Cross-Compliance link under the Business and Systems section on the home page.

The 19 Statutory Management Regulations (SMRs) and 6 Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAECs) are summarised into an easy guide on what you need to do to comply with those that are relevant to your farm business. There is also information on inspections, contacts for further information and training, links to publications and press articles and a section on frequently asked questions.

# Cross-Compliance - Hedges and Habitats

Keith Johnston, Senior Countryside Management Adviser, Co. Tyrone

The NI landscape is characterised by field boundaries and a variety of land types. Field boundaries, including hedges, provide shelter for stock, nesting cover for birds and a variety of habitats and food for wildlife. Semi-natural habitats are areas which support wildlife such as woodland, scrub, wetlands, flower rich meadows and moorland.

If you are claiming direct agricultural support, including Single Farm Payment, you must maintain your land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition. This includes retaining and protecting field boundaries and semi-natural habitats.

Listed below is a series of commonly asked questions relating to hedges and habitats.

## Can I remove a hedge?

Field boundaries (including hedges, rows of trees, stonewalls, sheughs and earthbanks) can only be removed after written permission has been obtained from us. We will visit the site and consider the area of the field, the reason for removal and the quality of the field boundary. Application forms for field boundary removal are available from your local DARD office.

## Can I remove a hedge at any time of the year?

If written permission has been received for hedge removal, the work cannot take place between 1 March and 31 August, during bird nesting season.

## When can I cut hedges?

Hedge cutting is not permitted between 1 March and 31 August. Hedge cutting during these dates is only permitted where health and safety is an issue, for example, roadside hedges.

## Can I remove hedgerow trees?

Hedgerow trees can be removed on rotation providing young saplings are allowed to grow and unless a tree preservation order is in place.

## Can I clean out sheughs?

Sheugh maintenance is permitted. It is recommended that sheugh cleaning should be carried out during the autumn to late winter. Although not a requirement of Cross Compliance, an Environment and Heritage Service Agricultural Waste Exemption must be obtained for the disposal of dredgings, by contacting EHS on 028 90 569360

## Can I pipe sheughs?

Permission is required from us for the piping of open sheughs. Field boundary removal forms are available from your local DARD office. Following approval, Rivers Agency should be contacted to advise on the most appropriate size of drainage pipe to use.

## Can I remove whin and scrub which are growing out from the hedge?

Whin and scrub, which are encroaching into the field area can be removed without permission from us. This work should not take place between 1 March and 31 August to avoid interference with nesting birds.

## Can I plough land which has not been cultivated in a long time?

Uncultivated land is defined as land which has not been ploughed in the last 15 years and is often characterised with a low percentage of productive grasses and an uneven surface. Uncultivated land is protected by the Environmental Impact Assessment (Agriculture) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007. If you intend to carry out new drainage works, ploughing, clearing, levelling, reseeding or cultivations on uncultivated land, you must have prior approval from us. Environmental Impact Assessment application forms are available from your local DARD office.

Further advice about maintaining land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition can be obtained by contacting Countryside Management Branch staff at your local DARD office.



Remember to leave sheugh cleaning until the autumn and winter period.

Hedge cutting between 1 March and 31 August is only permitted on health and safety grounds. This photo illustrates how a hedge has been trimmed on one side only to maintain visibility.

### Nitrates Directive News - Final Date for Derogation Applications is 7 July 2008

The Nitrates Action Programme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2008 brings into operation a derogation from the livestock manure application limit of 170kg Nitrogen per hectare per year. This allows eligible farmers to apply up to 250 kg grazing livestock manure Nitrogen per hectare per year.

The derogation is particularly important for the intensive grassland farms in NI with higher than average stocking rates. The main criteria of the derogation are that farms must:

- have at least 80% grassland;
- have a farm phosphorus balance of no more than 10kg phosphorus per hectare per year;
- carry out soil sampling to establish soil fertility status;
- only apply nitrogen and phosphorus to crop requirements;
- make an annual application by the farmer to EHS, DOE;
- produce and maintain annual fertilisation plans and accounts.

If you are still considering applying for a derogation, you should submit an application to EHS at the address below up to 7 July 2008. (Application forms are available from EHS or at [www.ehsni.gov.uk](http://www.ehsni.gov.uk).)

This exception applies for 2008 only. Applications for derogation in 2009 and/or 2010 must arrive at the address below no later than 1 March each year as laid down in the Regulations. Late applications will be refused and the 170kg N/ha/year limit will apply.

CAFRE will offer training in late August on the requirements of the derogation to 2008 applicants. Derogation Guidance Booklets will be made available in the coming weeks. These booklets will contain comprehensive information on the requirements of the derogation and templates to help with your record keeping.

For further information please contact the Agricultural Regulations Team, EHS, 17 Antrim Road, Lisburn, BT28 3AL, Telephone number 028 9262 3193.