

**Environment**  
**Peter Varley**



**Nitrates rules for derogation farmers**

The online system for submitting 2019 nitrates derogations applications is now open.

Intensively stocked farmers who exceed the nitrate regulations limit for livestock manure can apply for a derogation to increase their allowance. The current limit is 170kg of livestock manure nitrogen per hectare.

With a derogation in place, farmers can exceed that limit up to a maximum of 250kg/ha, subject to adherence to stricter rules.

For a nitrates derogation application to be valid, the following terms and conditions must be adhered to:

➔ An annual application must be made online to the Department. No postal applications will be accepted.

➔ Farming a holding that is at least 80% grass and have grazing livestock.

➔ 50% of all slurry produced on a derogation farm must be applied by 15 June annually. After this date, slurry can only be applied using low emission equipment.

➔ A derogation holding must have sufficient storage for all livestock manure and soiled water produced on the holding.

➔ Have a fertilisation plan in place on the holding by 1 March. This plan should be submitted to the Department along with the application form, unless the farmer has submitted a fertiliser plan to the Department in 2016, 2017 or 2018.

➔ Fertiliser plans must be based on soil analysis results dated after 15 September 2015.

➔ New applicants who do not have soil analysis results must assume Index 3 for 2019, but soil sample analysis, in respect of crop year 2020 must be available and the fertiliser plan amended accordingly and submitted online to the Department before 31 March 2020.

➔ Fertiliser accounts must be submitted to the Department no later than 31 March of the following year.

➔ Nitrates derogation applicants cannot import livestock manure on to their holding.

In 2018, 6,900 intensively stocked farmers availed of the derogation, an increase of 1,100 since 2014. The area under derogation has increased in the time period, with 466,000ha under derogation in 2018, up 133,800ha since 2014.

**Farm Finance**

**One in 10 await BDGP funds**

Of the 24,543 farmers signed up to the Beef Data and Genomics Programme (BDGP) for 2018, some 2,511 are still awaiting payment – 10% of applicants. Payments started to issue to farmers in early December 2018.

As of 11 January, 22,032 farmers have been paid €39,52m. In response to a parliamentary question from Fianna Fáil's Charlie McConalogue, Minister for Agriculture Michael Creed said those still awaiting payment had yet to pass all the required approval checks.

Minister Creed said: "All participants who have passed approval checks are paid. Further payments will continue to be made over the coming weeks as more participants become fully compliant with the requirements of the programme."

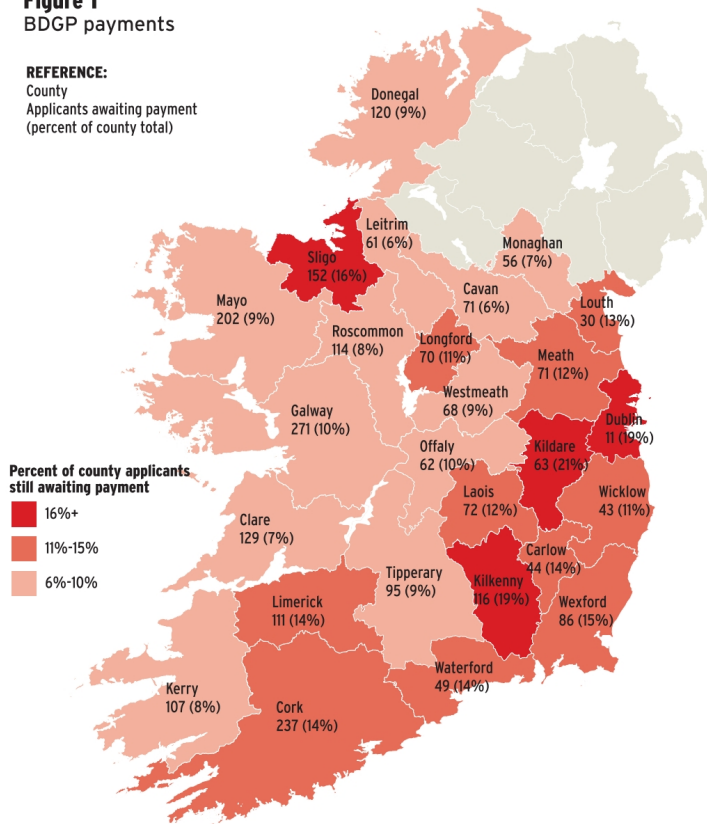
Farmers participating in the BDGP scheme have to undertake six requirements, including recording calving details, completion of surveys, animal genotyping and breeding requirements. Payment to farmers is at a rate of €142.50 for each of the first 6.66ha of eligible forage land and €120 on the remaining eligible hectares. These rates are based on cows calved on certain reference years.

– Barry Cassidy

**Figure 1**  
BDGP payments

**REFERENCE:**

County  
Applicants awaiting payment  
(percent of county total)



**Percent of county applicants still awaiting payment**

- 16%+
- 11%-15%
- 6%-10%

**35% of National Reserve applicants ineligible**

**WILLIAM CONLON**

For the second year in a row, a large proportion of applicants to the National Reserve are ineligible.

In 2017, 25% of the 1,300 farmers who applied for the

scheme did not meet eligibility criteria for the scheme. This has increased to 35% of applicants for the 2018 scheme year, or 350 out of 950 applicants.

Only €2.6m of the €3.5m designated to the National Reserve has been paid out to date. En-

titlements paid out through the scheme are worth €265/ha to eligible applicants, including greening.

Reasons for ineligibility include having already benefited from the National Reserve, not meeting the educational

requirements or exceeding the off-farm income limit of €40,000. Another issue is where farmers began farming more than five years previously.

Funding of €3m has been confirmed for the 2019 National Reserve.

**Vet's Corner**

**Investigating abortions in sheep**

**JOHN GILMORE**

Our practice has had some cases of sheep aborting in recent weeks, mainly in pedigree lambing flocks where early lambing is popular.

One recent case involved a hogget delivering two malformed lambs which were premature and partially decomposed.

The other ewe presented with a waterbag protruding from a prolapsed vagina, with incomplete dilation of the cervix.

This meant that the ewe had to have a caesarean section, re-

sulting in the delivery of two weak lambs which, while born alive, died before the ewe's operation ended.

In both cases, we took samples from the ewe's placenta and the surface of the lamb. The placenta samples were taken by rubbing a cotton swab on a placental cotyledon (button). A separate sample can be taken from the fluids on the surface of the lamb.

The samples were tested using PCR. This test can identify low levels of infectious material. The sample from the first hogget tested positive for toxoplasmosis, while the ewe had

been infected with enzootic abortion (EAE).

This method of testing differs from a blood sample, as it demonstrates the presence of the actual abortion-causing organism in the ewe's uterus, rather than demonstrating the ewe's immune response.

Toxoplasmosis is a parasitic disease which can be spread by cats. Therefore, ewes aborting due to toxoplasmosis are not directly infectious to other ewes. On the other hand, EAE is contagious and early identification can help by ensuring aborted ewes are kept isolated and allow for the preventa-

tion use of antibiotics in at-risk comrade animals.

However, as with any disease, antibiotics should not be relied upon for long-term control.

Early, accurate diagnosis of infectious abortion in ewes can help in the management of the disease and the selection of appropriate vaccination programmes.

John Gilmore is a practising veterinary surgeon and managing director of Farm-Lab Diagnostics, an animal health testing laboratory, www.farmlab.ie, in Elphin, Co Roscommon.

**Traditional farm buildings grant**

The GLAS traditional farm buildings grant is open for applications. Farmers who successfully apply to the scheme will be able to avail of grants up to €25,000 to restore and preserve traditional farm buildings and structures. Only farmers currently participating in GLAS will be able to apply to the 2019 scheme. The grants available range between €4,000 and €25,000 and can cover up to 75% of the cost of the works. Around 50 to 70 projects will be supported. The closing date is 5pm on Tuesday 19 February.

**Sheep census reminder**

Sheep farmers should be aware that the deadline for returning 2018 sheep census forms is Thursday 31 January via post or Thursday 14 February for online submissions. The census date is Monday 31 December and the closing date for receipt of completed 2018 forms returned by post in the pre-addressed envelope provided is Thursday 31 January. While the census return can be made by ordinary post, it should be noted that in the event of a dispute the only acceptable proof of postage is a registered post receipt - a postal certificate or express post receipt is not acceptable. The census returns may also be submitted online via www.agfood.ie (closing date extended to Thursday 14 February). The online system provides confirmation when a submission has been completed.

**Journal vet View**

<http://ifj.ie/vetview>

**Weekly vet view - Calving tips**

Talking through tips around calving cows.

