

Consultation Schedule – The Council Meeting 6 October 2026

	RECEIVED FROM	TITLE	SUBMISSION BY	CORPORATE RESPONSE Y/N
1.	Northern Ireland Assembly – Committee for the Economy	Regional Balance Bill – Call for Evidence	22 September 2026 (expired) (attached)	Y
	Further to our previous correspondence, the Regional Balance Bill successfully completed its 2nd Stage on 8 September 2026. The Committee Stage of the Bill is now underway. Owing to the pressures of the Economy Committee's legislative scrutiny programme, a call for evidence was launched early and in June 2026. If you wish to respond setting out your views on the objectives, proposals and potential consequences of the Bill and crucially setting out possible amendments to the Bill, please do so before noon on Tuesday 22 September.			
2.	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	Consultation on Potential Wildlife Intervention Options as part of the Bovine Tuberculosis in Northern Ireland: Blueprint for Eradication	9 October 2026	
	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' (DAERA) has launched a public consultation on Potential Wildlife Intervention options as part of the Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) in Northern Ireland: Blueprint for Eradication. The primary method for responses is online via Citizen Space. Consultation on Potential Wildlife Intervention Options as part of the Bovine Tuberculosis in Northern Ireland: Blueprint for Eradication Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs			

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3.	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	Proposed Animal Health Law Statutory Instrument – Registration, Approval, Traceability and Movements	13 October 2026 (attached)	
	A proposed new Statutory Instrument (SI), entitled The Animal Health Law (Registration, Approval, Traceability and Movements) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2027 is expected to be laid next year. This SI is under the direction and control of the Defra Secretary of State and is being progressed in Westminster. The SI will ensure that Northern Ireland has the necessary domestic powers, functions, offences and enforcement mechanisms to administer and enforce the directly applicable Regulation (EU) 2016/429, the Animal Health Law (AHL), and its associated delegated and implementing regulations. It will also revoke or amend domestic legislation that is no longer operable as a result of EU Directives having been repealed and replaced by the AHL framework. ... DAERA invites stakeholders to provide views on the practical implementation of the AHL, including the application of the new or extended offences and penalties, any sector-specific impacts and any operational issues that should be considered before the legislation is finalised. As the underlying EU regulatory requirements are not open to amendment through this process, responses should focus on their practical implementation and on the clarity and operability of the proposed domestic provisions. Stakeholders may find it helpful to refer to Annex A (Summary of Sector- Specific Changes) and Annex B (Levels of Penalties) when considering their response. Please provide any comments by 13 October 2026 to AHL@daera-ni.gov.uk			

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4.	Department of Health	Consultation on Restricting Promotions of Products High in Fat, Sugar and Salt (HFSS)	21 October 2026	
	The Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland and the Department of Health have launched a public consultation seeking views on proposals to introduce restrictions on the promotion and placement of products high in fat, sugar and salt (HFSS) in Northern Ireland. The proposed restrictions would apply to certain volume price promotions, the placement of HFSS products in prominent retail locations, and free refill promotions for sugar-sweetened soft drinks. Similar measures are already in place in England and Wales, with Scotland due to introduce equivalent measures from October 2026. • Consultation on Restricting Promotions of Products High in Fat, Sugar and Salt (HFSS) Department of Health			
5.	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs	Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2032	27 October 2026	Y
	The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is seeking views on the draft Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2032. • Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2032 Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs			

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6.	Department of Education	Public Consultation on Measures to Support Mobile Phone-Free Schools in Northern Ireland	19 November 2026	
	Public Consultation on "Measures to Support Mobile Phone-Free Schools in Northern Ireland" and related documents. Public Consultation on Measures to Support Mobile Phone-Free Schools in Northern Ireland Department of Education			

Available to View

RECEIVED FROM	TITLE	PUBLISHED
Department of Finance	Department of Finance Land Registration Fees Orders Consultation	Department of Finance Land Registration Fees Orders Consultation Department of Finance

Open Consultations (previously Listed)

- Department for Infrastructure Review of the Classes and Thresholds in the Schedule to the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 submission by 9 October 2026
- Department of Agricultural, Environment and Rural Affairs Consultations on the draft Irish Sea Pelagic and Demersal Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) submission by 21 October 2026
- The Food Standards Agency and the Department of Health Consultation on proposals to restrict the promotion of products high in fat, sugar or salt in Northern Ireland submission by 21 October 2026
- Northern Ireland Water Consultation on proposed Article 161 Sewer Bond incentivisation and Surety Policy Framework – submission by 20 October 2026
- Department for Communities Historic Environment Policy Consultation submission by 23 October 2026



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council
info@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

10 September 2026

Dear Stakeholder,

Regional Balance Bill – Call for Evidence

Further to our previous correspondence, the Regional Balance Bill successfully completed its 2nd Stage on 8 September 2026. The Committee Stage of the Bill is now underway.

Owing to the pressures of the Economy Committee's legislative scrutiny programme, a call for evidence was launched early and in June 2026. If you wish to respond setting out your views on the objectives, proposals and potential consequences of the Bill and crucially **setting out possible amendments to the Bill**, please do so before noon on **Tuesday 22 September 2026**.

You can respond to this call for evidence with suggested amendments using the Committee's Regional Balance Bill survey at the following link: [Survey link](#)

Alternatively, the Committee would welcome a related written response in the format of a Microsoft Word document addressing ***any or all*** of the clauses of the Bill before noon on **Tuesday 22 September 2026** submitted to Committee.Economy@niassembly.gov.uk.

Please see the following link to the [Guide to submitting evidence to Assembly Committees in written or other formats](#).

For your information, please also see the following link to the Economy Committee webpage including information on its current membership: [Committee for the Economy](#).

Should you have any queries in respect of the Committee Stage of the Bill, please do not hesitate to contact Committee staff at:
Committee.Economy@niassembly.gov.uk.



Regional Balance Bill

The full text of the Bill and the explanatory and financial memorandum can be found here: [Regional Balance Bill](#)

This Private Member's Bill seeks to improve regional economic balance across Northern Ireland. The Bill seeks to do so by imposing a duty on the Executive to develop and implement a framework setting out how disparities in regional economic performance and living standards are to be addressed and to review the effectiveness of the framework. The Bill would also require departments to have due regard to the framework and to reducing these disparities when developing their own policies and plans and to report annually on progress. The Bill would require the Department for the Economy to prepare the framework and report annually on its implementation and to also undertake related research and provide guidance.

The Bill also sets out a non-exhaustive list of regional disparity indices which are based on statistical geographies designated by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency including but not limited to, Local Government Districts as well as other relevant data catchments areas.

The key provisions of the Bill are set out below.

Clause 1: places a duty on the Executive to develop, adopt, maintain and implement a regional disparity Framework. The Framework would set out outcomes, departmental roles, mechanisms and methodologies to address regional disparity. It would be consulted upon, laid before the Assembly and published within 12 months of the legislation coming into operation.

Clause 2: requires departments, when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, to have due regard to the need to reduce regional disparity and to the Framework.

Cause 3: requires departments to compile, retain and provide information to the Department for the Economy to support annual reporting, including actions taken and evaluations of progress and impact. The Department for the Economy would issue guidance on format and timing.

Clause 4: requires the Department for the Economy to publish and lay before the Assembly an annual report on implementation of the Regional Balance Act, including the extent of progress in reducing regional imbalances in line with outcomes and related targets. It also requires the Minister to make a relevant



statement on the report. The first report is due within 18 months of the first framework being adopted by the Executive.

Clause 5: requires the Executive to review the Framework's operation and effectiveness within five years of the first Framework being laid, and then at least once every five years thereafter.

Clause 6: confers ancillary functions on the Department for the Economy to provide guidance and information, and to undertake, commission or support research on regional disparities. The clause also enables the Department for the Economy to undertake promotion of awareness, engagement and best practice.

Clause 7: provides a non-exhaustive list of regional disparity indices including: gross domestic product per head of population; average and median disposable household income per head of population; unemployment rates, employment rates and economic inactivity rates; productivity, including gross value added per employee; health data, including average life expectancy; education data, including attainment rates; indices of deprivation; affordable housing; access to airports; and the regional distribution of public capital expenditure. The clause also defines "regions" by reference to statistical geographies within Northern Ireland designated by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency including, but not limited to, Local Government Districts as well as other data catchments.

Clause 8: sets out that the Bill would be commenced immediately after Royal Assent.

Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Peter McCallion.

Peter McCallion
Clerk to the Committee for the Economy



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30 September 2026

Dear Stakeholder,

Proposed Animal Health Law Statutory Instrument – Registration, Approval, Traceability and Movements

I am writing to provide you with an overview of a proposed new Statutory Instrument (SI), entitled **The Animal Health Law (Registration, Approval, Traceability and Movements) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2027**, which is expected to be laid next year. This SI is under the direction and control of the Defra Secretary of State and is being progressed in Westminster.

The SI will ensure that Northern Ireland has the necessary domestic powers, functions, offences and enforcement mechanisms to administer and enforce the directly applicable **Regulation (EU) 2016/429**, the Animal Health Law (AHL), and its associated delegated and implementing regulations. It will also revoke or amend domestic legislation that is no longer operable as a result of EU Directives having been repealed and replaced by the AHL framework.

The purpose of this letter is to make stakeholders aware of the proposed SI and the key changes arising from the AHL that have already been implemented or will be implemented over the coming months. While the underlying EU regulatory requirements are not open to amendment, DAERA would welcome views on any practical implementation issues, including the proposed approach to enforcement, before the legislation is finalised and the new requirements are implemented.

Background

Following the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, certain areas of EU law apply in Northern Ireland under the terms of the Windsor Framework. These relate to the movement of goods, agri-food standards, and animal and plant health.

One of the EU Regulations that applies in Northern Ireland is the AHL. The AHL provides a framework for the prevention and control of animal diseases that can be

transmitted to animals or humans. It applies to terrestrial and aquatic animals, germinal products, products of animal origin and, in some circumstances, wild animals.

The AHL is listed in Annex 2 of the Windsor Framework and applies directly in Northern Ireland. However, domestic legislation is required to ensure that its provisions are fully operable and enforceable, including by conferring appropriate powers, functions and enforcement mechanisms on DAERA as the competent authority.

Future UK-EU SPS alignment

The UK Government has also announced its intention, through the planned UK-EU SPS Agreement, to align Great Britain with relevant EU sanitary and phytosanitary rules, including the AHL. If implemented as envisaged, movements of animals and animal products between Northern Ireland and Great Britain would therefore operate within a closely aligned SPS regime.

What the SI will cover

The proposed SI will establish a domestic regulatory framework needed to give effect to the AHL requirements in Northern Ireland. It will include provisions relating to the:

- registration and approval of operators and establishments;
- identification of terrestrial animals and movement of terrestrial and aquatic animals, germinal products and products of animal origin within Northern Ireland;
- movement of animals, germinal products, and products of animal origin between Northern Ireland and EU Member States and from outside the EU;
- non-commercial movements of pet animals; and
- enforcement of the AHL requirements, including the powers available to authorised officers and the process for appealing certain Departmental decisions.

The proposed SI will help maintain a coherent and enforceable animal health framework in Northern Ireland, protecting animal and public health, supporting trade, and providing greater clarity and consistency for operators and enforcement authorities.

The SI will not create an entirely new regulatory regime. Many of the requirements are already reflected in existing domestic legislation, operational systems or administrative arrangements. However, the SI will bring those requirements together within a coherent domestic framework and, where necessary, apply them to a wider range of operators, establishments or species.

The SI also makes a number of consequential amendments to existing domestic legislation, to update terminology and references to reflect the introduction of the AHL and the repeal of EU Directives and Regulations.

A separate SI is being developed to implement the AHL requirements relating to disease preparedness, surveillance and control, and stakeholders will be updated on this separately.

Key sectors and activities affected

The proposed SI will affect a range of sectors and activities, including livestock identification and movements, germinal product establishments and movements, equine identification and traceability, aquatic animal health requirements, movements between Northern Ireland and the EU or from outside the EU, non-commercial pet movements, and other animal-related establishments and activities.

A more detailed summary of the sector-specific changes is provided in **Annex A**. Stakeholders are encouraged to consider that Annex when identifying any practical implementation issues, sector-specific impacts or operational concerns.

Offences, penalties, enforcement and appeals

The SI will provide the necessary enforcement powers to support compliance with the AHL. In doing so, the policy is to carry forward and modernise the enforcement provisions that already exist in current domestic legislation, rather than create a wholly new enforcement regime.

Offences and penalties will be aligned with existing requirements as far as possible. Where existing offences or penalties need to be extended, this will generally occur because the AHL applies requirements to new species, operators, establishments or activities. In those circumstances, the intention is to keep penalties consistent with comparable existing requirements as far as possible.

To provide clarity and consistency, the SI proposes a three-tier penalty structure which broadly reflects existing penalty levels while providing a more consistent framework across different sectors and activities. Further detail on the proposed categories of offences and associated penalties is provided in **Annex B**.

The proposed approach is intended to maintain broadly equivalent enforcement outcomes to those already available under existing domestic legislation, while ensuring that the offences and penalties framework operates effectively within the AHL regime.

Overall, the existing enforcement approach will remain in place, subject to modernisation and clarification where necessary. Any changes are intended to ensure that the provisions are clear, operable and capable of supporting effective compliance with the AHL in Northern Ireland.

Appeals

The proposed SI is expected to include a formal appeals process in relation to certain decisions made by the Department, providing an additional safeguard for affected persons. The proposed process would provide a mechanism to seek review of discretionary decisions, such as the refusal, suspension or withdrawal of an approval, or the issuing of an enforcement notice.

A person aggrieved by such a decision would be able to apply in writing for the decision to be reviewed. The review would be carried out by a departmental official who was not involved in making the original decision. Where the outcome of the review is not accepted, a further right of appeal would be available to a Magistrates' Court.

What this means for stakeholders

For many stakeholders, the practical effect of the proposed SI is expected to be limited, as many requirements are already reflected in existing legislation, operational systems or established administrative processes. However, some operators, establishments or sectors may be subject to new or extended obligations where the AHL applies to a wider range of species, activities or operators.

Comments and next steps

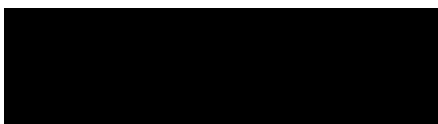
DAERA invites stakeholders to provide views on the practical implementation of the AHL, including the application of the new or extended offences and penalties, any sector-specific impacts and any operational issues that should be considered before the legislation is finalised. As the underlying EU regulatory requirements are not open to amendment through this process, responses should focus on their practical implementation and on the clarity and operability of the proposed domestic provisions. Stakeholders may find it helpful to refer to **Annex A** (Summary of Sector-Specific Changes) and **Annex B** (Levels of Penalties) when considering their response.

Please provide any comments by **13 October 2026** to AHL@daera-ni.gov.uk

If it would be helpful, DAERA would be happy to meet with stakeholders or sector representatives to discuss the proposed changes in more detail.

Following consideration of the responses received, DAERA will undertake further engagement, where appropriate, on the detailed arrangements for implementing the key changes.

Yours faithfully



Christopher Andrews

Animal Health and Welfare Policy Division

Annex A Summary of Sector-Specific Changes

Annex B Levels of Penalties

Summary of sector-specific changes under EU Animal Health Law

Annex A summarises the main sector-specific changes expected under the proposed SI. Some of these changes have already been implemented, while others will be introduced over the coming months or following necessary operational or system changes. It is intended to help stakeholders identify whether the changes affect their sector or activities and to focus responses on practical implementation issues, operational impacts and any points requiring further clarification.

Livestock Identification, Registration, and Movement

Cattle, sheep and goats

- The 'XI' prefix code is now used for the identification of cattle, sheep and goats, replacing the former 'UK' prefix. This requirement has applied since June 2024.
- The record retention period for cattle records will be reduced from 10 years to 3 years following the death of the animal or when it leaves the possession of the operator.
- Sheep and goats imported from third countries must be re-identified within 20 days of arrival, increasing the current period from 14 days.

Pigs

- The AHL introduces the concept of 'supply chains' for the pig sector. A supply chain consists of two or more linked establishments, comprising a single breeding unit and one or more finishing units.
- Supply chains must be approved by the Department and all establishments forming part of the supply chain must be registered.
- Pigs moving within a supply chain must be identified before leaving the final establishment in the supply chain.
- All movements between establishments within the supply chain must be recorded and notified to the Department within seven days.
- The Department will make available a list of approved supply chains on request.
- Pigs imported from third countries must be re-identified within 20 days of arrival, reducing the current period from 30 days.
- Operators will be required to record the location of any slap mark applied to an animal.
- Existing curer marks will be replaced by establishment (holding) codes on slap marks.
- Where slap marks are used to identify finished pigs, they must display the unique registration number of the establishment, or the final establishment within the supply chain.

- These changes are expected to be introduced during late 2027 following the necessary NIFAIS system enhancements.

Poultry and hatching eggs

- Under the Animal Health Law framework, requirements for poultry and hatching eggs primarily concern establishment registration, record keeping and, where poultry or hatching eggs are moved to EU Member States, establishment approval. Most poultry establishments already meet most of these requirements, so the impact of the new legislation is expected to be minimal.

Alpacas, llamas and deer

- All establishments keeping alpacas, llamas or deer must be registered with the Department. This requirement must be met by **30 September 2026**.
- Animals must be identified using an approved means of identification within nine months of birth or before leaving the establishment of birth, whichever occurs first.
- From **4 January 2027**, any alpaca, llama or deer not previously identified will be required to comply with these identification requirements.
- Approved forms of identification include ear tags and injectable transponders. In the case of cervids, tattoos may also be used.
- Operators must maintain records relating to animal identification, movements, numbers of animals kept and animal mortalities.
- Records must be retained for at least **three years** following the death of an animal or after it leaves the possession of the operator.
- Animals arriving from third countries must be re-identified within **20 days** of arrival in Northern Ireland or before leaving the establishment of first arrival, whichever occurs first.
- Animals intended for slaughter within five days of arrival are exempt from the re-identification requirement.
- For movements from Northern Ireland to an EU Member State, health certification may be required, and movement notifications may be necessary for trade purposes.
- Operators must record all movements of animals into and out of their establishment. These movements do not require routine notification to the Department.

Livestock dealers and transporters

- All livestock dealers, including those operating independently of, or from, an establishment, will be required to register with the Department.
- Transporters involved in the movement of animals between Northern Ireland and EU Member States, including Ireland, will be required to register with the

Department where they are not already authorised under Welfare in Transport Legislation.

- The Animal Health Law introduces additional record-keeping obligations for livestock dealers and transporters.

Offences and penalties in relation to the livestock sector

The current offences and penalties regime for livestock identification, registration, movement and record-keeping will largely be carried forward from existing domestic legislation and modernised where necessary to reflect the Animal Health Law framework. The intention is to keep offences and penalties aligned with existing requirements as far as possible.

Some offences will be extended to cover new requirements applying to alpacas, llamas and deer, and to clarify registration obligations for operators, including livestock dealers and transporters. Where this results in new or extended offences, the proposed penalties have been aligned with comparable existing requirements and will generally be subject to a Band B penalty.

The Animal Health Law also introduces enhanced biosecurity and disease prevention requirements relating to the movement and transport of terrestrial animals, particularly where animals are moved to an EU Member State. Failure to comply with these requirements will constitute an offence. The applicable penalties are species-specific, with Band A penalties applying in relation to bovine animals and Band B penalties applying to other livestock species including poultry and hatching eggs.

New offences have also been included in relation to modifying a means of identification, or possessing, supplying or acquiring a means of identification for an animal that is not in the operator's possession. While existing domestic legislation already contains certain offences relating to the misuse of animal identification, these provisions have been strengthened and extended to additional species. The offences are intended to address identification fraud and the misuse of official identifiers, thereby supporting the integrity of the livestock traceability system. Reflecting the seriousness of these offences, a Band A penalty is proposed for all livestock species.

Germinal Products (Semen, eggs and oocytes)

- While many existing requirements will continue to apply, the Animal Health Law introduces a more structured framework for the registration, approval and operation of germinal product establishments.
- Female bovine donors of germinal products, including oocytes and embryos intended for movement to EU Member States, must demonstrate lifetime freedom from specified diseases, including bovine tuberculosis, *Brucella abortus* infection, enzootic bovine leukosis and infectious bovine rhinotracheitis.
- Operators with on-farm storage facilities used for the storage of germinal products will be required to register with the Department. Previously, equivalent requirements applied only in relation to bovine germinal products.
- Persons involved in the collection, production, processing or storage of germinal products from additional species will also be required to register with the Department. This includes activities involving camelids, cervids, cats, dogs and ferrets.
- The Animal Health Law introduces more detailed requirements relating to the movement of germinal products, including marking, traceability, certification, notification and accompanying documentation requirements.
- Record-keeping requirements are standardised across approved and registered germinal product establishments, with records generally required to be retained for a minimum period of three years.

Offences and penalties in relation to germinal product establishments

The current offences and penalties regime for germinal products will largely be carried forward from existing domestic legislation and modernised where necessary to reflect the Animal Health Law framework. The proposed offences and penalties have been aligned with the Band B penalty level, providing greater consistency across the wider animal health framework.

The proposed approach is intended to maintain broadly equivalent enforcement outcomes to those already available under existing domestic legislation, while ensuring that the offences and penalties framework operates effectively within the Animal Health Law regime.

Most offences are broadly equivalent to those already provided for under previous domestic legislation, with amendments where necessary to reflect new or updated regulatory requirements.

As with other approval regimes introduced under the Animal Health Law, operators will be required to notify the Department where approved activities cease or where there are significant changes to those activities. Failure to comply with these requirements will constitute an offence. These notification requirements were not explicitly provided for under previous domestic legislation.

The scope of the germinal product framework has also been extended to additional species. As a result, offences that previously applied to a narrower range of germinal product activities will apply more broadly across the sector.

The Animal Health Law also strengthens traceability requirements for movements of germinal products between Northern Ireland and EU Member States. This includes duties on destination operators to verify markings and animal health certification and, where necessary, notify the competent authority of irregularities. In addition, certain movements of germinal products within Northern Ireland will be subject to self-declaration and accompanying documentation requirements. Corresponding offences are included to support compliance with these obligations.

Equine Identification, Registration, and Movement

- An operator of an establishment keeping equines must register with the Department. This has been a requirement since 1 February 2026.
- An operator is required to provide the Department with the numbers of equines kept at their establishment and to provide the Unique Equine Life Number (UELN) and transponder code for each equine.
- An operator must maintain records relating to animal identification, movements, numbers of animals kept and animal mortalities.
- Records must be retained for at least three years following the death of an animal or after it leaves the possession of the operator.
- An operator is required to provide the Department with the identification details of the equines habitually kept at their establishment (on the establishment for greater than 30 days), and to update the Department with any changes of habitual residence.
- Persons performing animal health functions must comply with the requirements applicable to those functions, e.g. Passport Issuing Organisations must require an equine establishment number at the point of passport application.
- An operator must ensure that an equine passport is kept up to date and correct at all times e.g. a change to ownership is updated within 7 days (previous 30 days).
- Introduction of the authorisation to use digital passports.
- Specification requirements for equine transponders including a 3-digit country code.

Offences and penalties in relation to equines

The current offences and penalties regime for equine identification, registration, and record-keeping will largely be carried forward from existing domestic legislation and modernised where necessary to reflect the AHL framework. The intention is to keep offences and penalties aligned with existing requirements as far as possible.

Some offences will be extended to cover new requirements applying to registration, movement and record keeping, and to clarify registration obligations for operators. Where this results in new or extended offences, the proposed penalties have been aligned with comparable existing requirements.

An extended offence is also proposed in relation to the possession, supply or acquisition of means of identification for an animal that is not in the operator's possession. This is intended to address potential identification fraud or misuse of identification and to support the integrity of an equine traceability system.

Aquatic animals, and products of animal origin from aquatic animals — registration, approval and movements

- The AHL introduces new terminology. For example, aquaculture production business is now termed approved aquaculture establishment. It also defines, and has specific rules for, confined establishment and disease control aquatic food establishment.
- Conditional approval of aquaculture establishments may now be granted, under certain circumstances, for a period of 3 months prior to full approval.
- New requirement for operators of approved aquaculture establishments to inform the Department 28 days in advance of changes/cessation of activity.
- Record-keeping obligations for certain records are now extended to registered establishments and there are additional record-keeping obligations for approved establishments. The record retention period will be reduced from four years to three years.
- Disease prevention and certain record-keeping obligations are extended to all transporters of aquatic animals. The previous exemption for transporters who transport aquatic animals in small (less than one cubic metre) watertight and airtight containers will no longer apply.
- The rules for movements are more specific. There are extended requirements for operators to ensure aquatic animals are consigned directly to destination; and for operators receiving the animals, to carry out documentary and health checks and to isolate animals where irregularities are found, until the Department has taken a decision regarding them.
- New movement-specific requirements for confined establishments; and for movements of aquatic animals intended for specific uses and purposes, including into the wild, sports fishing, live fishing bait, etc.
- New requirement for operators to complete a self-declaration document to accompany consignments of aquaculture animals moving to the EU, and for which animal health certification is not required.
- Requirement for operators to take general disease prevention measures during all stages of production, processing and distribution for products of animal origin from aquatic animals, other than live.

Offences and Penalties in relation to Aquatic Animals and Products of Animal Origin

The current offences and penalties regime for registration, approval, movement and record-keeping will largely be carried forward from existing domestic legislation and modernised, where necessary, to reflect the Animal Health Law framework. The intention is to keep offences and penalties aligned with existing requirements as far as possible.

Where the new or extended requirements highlighted above have resulted in new or extended offences, the proposed penalties have been aligned with existing requirements. New offences are proposed for operators of approved establishments, including confined and disease control aquatic food establishments, in relation to advance notification of changes to approved activities and cessation of activity and, where required, the Department's amendment of the establishment's approval regarding changes. Offences are also proposed in relation to the new

requirement for self-declaration documentation by operators for movements to the EU where an animal health certificate is not required. Further offences are proposed for certain movements of aquatic animals that are either new or were not explicit in previous legislation, including movements to confined establishments and movements of aquatic animals intended for specific uses and purposes, including release into the wild, sports fishing and fishing bait.

Some offences have also been extended to account for any additional activities now required under the Animal Health Law framework, including: additional record-keeping requirements for approved establishments and extension of record keeping requirements to registered establishments; disease prevention and record-keeping obligations for transporters as a result of the previous exemption for transporting in small containers no longer applying; the additional activities required by operators to ensure animals are moved directly to destination and undertaking checks at destination; and the requirement for operators to take general disease prevention measures during all stages of production, processing and distribution in relation to products of animal origin from aquatic animals, other than live.

The proposed level of penalty for these offences is consistent with the previous legislative framework and has therefore been aligned with the Band C penalty level within the SI.

Non-commercial movements of pet animals (Dogs, Cats, Ferrets or Birds)

- Validity of an Animal Health Certificate extended from four months to six months.
- EU pet passports can only be issued to owners who have their main residence inside the EU.
- Maximum number of pets (dogs, cats, ferrets or birds) that can travel is five per vehicle.
- Authorised Person – if someone other than the owner is travelling with a pet, in addition to having a written authorisation from the pet owner, the authorisation must be attached to the AHC or Passport and the pet owner must travel within five days of the pet movement.
- A transponder implanted (dogs, cats and ferrets) from 1 January 2028 must contain the code of the country where the animal was initially identified

Offences and penalties

While there are no specific penalties in relation to the requirements for pet animals, the general enforcement provisions will apply and in relation to pet animals these have been aligned with the Band B penalty level, providing greater consistency across the wider animal health framework.

Other operators, animal species and establishments

New registration requirements will apply to the following:

- Transporters of cats, dogs and ferrets being moved to the EU
- travelling circuses and animal acts
- establishments keeping captive birds, including birds kept for shows, races, exhibitions, competitions, breeding or selling;
- establishments keeping bees;
- animal shelters and assembly centres;
- confined establishments, such as zoos, laboratories and some wildlife parks; and
- post-import quarantine establishments.

Additional requirements will also apply in relation to record-keeping, movement notification and animal identification.

These new requirements will result in the creation of new or extended offences. The proposed approach is to align penalties with existing penalties as far as possible, while maintaining a common framework across the Animal Health Law.

Where existing registers are already in place, such as the Bird Register, or the registration of transporters under welfare legislation, where possible these will be used to satisfy the requirements of the Animal Health Law.

Movements between NI and European Union (EU) Member States

Operators in NI moving live animals, germinal products (GP) and products of animal origin (POAO) between NI and the EU already comply with the core requirements of AHL through compliance with existing traceability, pre-notification and EU health certification requirements. The proposed SI therefore does not introduce any significant new requirements for operators. The practical impact is expected to be minimal.

Offences and penalties in relation to movements between NI and the EU

The current offences and penalties relating to the movement of animals, GP and POAO between NI and the EU will be transferred from The Trade in Animals and Related Products Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 to the proposed SI and revised, with additional offences proposed to reflect the AHL framework. Minor amendments will also be made to other domestic legislation relating to imports in order to align with AHL.

The proposed offences include moving an animal without complying with the AHL movement requirements, failing to provide the required information for animal health certification and failing to ensure an animal is subjected to the required official checks before certification.

Although the substantive requirements governing the movement of animals, GP and POAO between NI and the EU are largely unchanged by AHL, additional offences are required to ensure that all key obligations can be enforced effectively. This will reduce potential enforcement gaps, helping to protect animal and public health.

The proposed level of penalty for these offences is consistent with the existing framework for import and trade-related animal health requirements and has therefore been aligned with the Band C penalty level within the SI.

Entry into NI from Outside the EU

Operators in NI moving live animals, germinal products and products of animal origin into NI from outside the EU already comply with the principal AHL requirements that apply before entry into NI, including pre-notification, health certification and import eligibility requirements. The new requirements introduced by the proposed SI are outlined below and are largely post-entry controls, applying after arrival in NI:

Master of the Vessel Declaration

- All terrestrial animals and hatching eggs transported by sea must be accompanied by a Master of the Vessel declaration confirming details of the journey and maintenance of animal health status during transport.

Breeding poultry, productive poultry (other than productive poultry for restocking supplies of game birds) and day-old chicks

- Clinical inspection required by an official veterinarian at the establishment of destination before the end of the applicable post-entry residency period.
- Where necessary, sampling and testing will be required to monitor their health status.
- This also applies to breeding poultry and productive poultry hatched from imported hatching eggs.

Breeding ratites, productive ratites and day-old chicks of ratites

- Ratites (such as ostriches, emus and rheas) originating from countries not free from Newcastle Disease Virus (NDV) require mandatory testing for NDV before release from isolation.
- This also applies to ratites hatched from imported hatching eggs.

Ungulates

- The 30-day post-entry residency requirement now applies across the broader AHL category of ungulates, including camelids and cervids. An exemption applies to certain registered equines.

Confined Establishments

- The former Balai Directive framework for approved bodies, institutes and centres has been replaced by the AHL confined establishment regime.
- Certain animals imported from outside the EU may now enter approved confined establishments under AHL rules.
- Additional post-entry requirements may apply, including direct transport to the confined establishment, notification of arrival, mandatory quarantine or

residency periods, veterinary supervision and compliance with any required surveillance or testing measures.

Honeybees

- Prior DAERA authorisation is required before a queen honeybee may be transferred from its transport cage, and the transfer must take place under DAERA supervision.

Offences and penalties in relation to entry into NI from outside the EU

The offences and penalties currently contained in the Trade in Animals and Related Products Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 relating to the entry of animals, germinal products and products of animal origin into NI from outside the EU will be updated by the proposed SI to reflect the AHL framework. Minor amendments will also be made to other domestic legislation relating to imports in order to align with AHL.

Additional offences are proposed in relation to certain AHL post-entry requirements applying to imported consignments. These include requirements relating to transport from the point of entry in NI to the establishment of destination, breaking or tampering with a seal, residency periods, isolation, quarantine, inspection and notification of arrival. The proposed offences apply to a range of species and commodities, including ungulates, poultry, bees, dogs, cats, ferrets, hatching eggs and germinal products.

The proposed level of penalty for these offences is consistent with the existing framework for import and trade-related animal health requirements and has therefore been aligned with the Band C penalty level within the SI.

Levels of Penalties

The three levels of penalty are:

- Band A: Fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (currently £5,000), imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months, or both on summary conviction; fine, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years, or both on conviction on indictment.
- Band B: Fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 months, or both on summary conviction; fine, imprisonment for a term not exceeding 1 year, or both on conviction on indictment.
- Band C: Fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale on summary conviction; fine on conviction on indictment.

The Band A penalties align with those currently in place for cattle identification, registration and movement (IRM) offences. These higher penalties reflect the enhanced traceability requirements applicable to bovine animals and the potentially significant animal health, trade and economic consequences that may arise from non-compliance.

Band B penalties reflect those currently in place for sheep, goats and pig IRM offences, as well as offences relating to the traceability of germinal products. This intermediate penalty level has been simplified from the current regime to provide a more standardised approach and includes provision for conviction on indictment. The inclusion of indictment proceedings is intended to ensure consistency across the overall penalty framework. In practice, it is expected that the majority of cases would continue to be dealt with by a Magistrates' Court.

Band C represents the lowest penalty category and reflects the penalty levels historically applied to equine, aquatic animal and certain other animal health requirements under existing legislation. Band C also aligns with the penalties currently available for non-compliance relating to the movement of animals, germinal products and products of animal origin into or out of Northern Ireland. In many cases, non-compliance in this area is primarily addressed through regulatory measures such as seizure, re-dispatch, quarantine or destruction of animals or products, which may provide a more immediate and effective compliance response than prosecution.