



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Animal &  
Plant Health  
Agency



Centre for Environment  
Fisheries and Aquaculture  
Science



Veterinary  
Medicines  
Directorate



Rural Payments  
Agency

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# Farm Regulators' Charter



Environment  
Agency



Forestry Commission  
England



# Foreword

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Farming is a fundamental part of our rural economy, producing food, providing jobs and generating over £100 billion a year for our economy.

The government is committed to cutting unnecessary red tape for farmers so they can focus on farming rather than form filling.

To support farmers and to reduce the regulatory burden on compliant farmers, the government will be reducing the number of farm visits made by the Government by 20,000 by 2020.

To achieve this reduction in burden on compliant farmers the government will be:

- making better use of intelligence to focus farm visits on non-compliant farm businesses and areas and activities of highest risk
- making use of data and modern technology (including remote sensing such as satellites) to remove the need for some visits
- increasing the use of information from Farm Assurance schemes to reduce the need for or frequency of visits from Farm Regulators
- approving and adopting “Earned Recognition” schemes to inform selection of visits by risk assessment

Farm Regulators continue to visit farm premises to carry out an inspection to check that you are complying with legislation, to undertake surveillance for diseases to protect the health of your livestock or follow up on intelligence or complaints received.

This Farm Regulators Charter brings together the principles that all Farm Regulators in England follow when visiting farms.

It has been created by the Farm Regulators to give farmers a clear idea of what they can expect from a visiting Farm Regulator and how farmers can support the Farm Regulator to minimise the disruption to the farmer’s working day.

Covering all inspection types and visits of agricultural and aquaculture activities carried out by Farm Regulators, the Charter supports more efficient and consistent ways of working across the Farm Regulators. This leads to a consistent approach for farmers across the country in respect to their interactions with Farm Regulators

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# Objectives of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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The Farm Regulators' Charter has been produced to summarise the core principles that all Farm Regulators have adopted in their approach to farm visits.

This is to ensure that these core principles are visible so that farmers know what to expect from the Farm Regulator during a farm visit

The Farm Regulators' Charter:

- applies to all Farm Regulators in England
- covers all inspection types and visits of agricultural and aquaculture activities carried out by Farm Regulators
- supports a “best practice” approach to regulation of farm businesses
- supports more efficient and consistent ways of working across the Farm Regulators
- supports a consistent approach for farmers across the country in respect to their interactions with Farm Regulators
- supports data sharing between Farm Regulators

All regulators are required to have regard to the [Regulators' Code](#), which is the framework for how regulators should engage with those they regulate.

The purpose of this Farm Regulators' Charter is to provide the farming community with the principles that all regulators in England follow for farm visits in line with the Regulators' Code. The Charter also highlights how Defra and other Regulators are working together more effectively to improve the service they provide to farming communities.

The main reasons why a Farm Regulator might visit farm premises are to:

- carry out an inspection to check that you are complying with legislation
- undertake surveillance for diseases to protect the health of your livestock
- follow up on intelligence or complaints received regarding any non-compliances

Information about who will inspect your farm and what they're looking for: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-inspections>

## Who are the Farm Regulators?

Regulators who visit farms to carry out inspections or provide advice are:

- Animal and Plant Health Agency \*
- Environment Agency\*
- Natural England\*
- Rural Payment Agency\*
- Veterinary Medicines Directorate\*
- Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science \*
- Forestry Commission England\*
- Local Authorities in England – Trading Standards Officers and Environmental Health Officers
- The Food Standards Agency

\*on behalf of Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (Defra)

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# Core Principles of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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## i. Co-Ordination of Farm Regulators

By 2020, the aim is to have a Co-ordination Unit in the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) that will:

- co-ordinate all farm visits carried out by all Farm Regulators
  - improve the capability in England to co-ordinate visits across Regulators thus reducing the potential regulatory burden placed on low risk and compliant farm businesses
  - enable Farm Regulators to work more effectively together
  - work to ensure that any information and data gathered by Farm Regulators is shared to better target those non-compliant businesses, high risk areas and activities and inform visit selection based on risk profiles
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# Core Principles of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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## ii. Reasons for Visits

Farm inspections are necessary to protect the quality of the environment, safeguard the 'farm to plate' food chain and the welfare of our livestock, as well as animal, plant and human health. They also safeguard public money and the rural economy.

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Farm Regulators will arrange for their inspectors to carry out visits for different purposes and where appropriate will book the visit by prior appointment or prior notification. In line with UK and EU legislative requirements (for so long as they apply) some additional inspection activities may be carried out during the booked visit. The purpose of the additional activities will be fully explained by the inspector at the start of the visit

If a prior appointment is made, the purpose of the visit will be clearly explained at the time of booking. Any additional information to help with the visit preparation will be made available as appropriate in advance of the agreed date of the visit.

If an inspector from one Farm Regulator is also conducting a visit on behalf of another Regulator the inspector will explain which additional Regulator they are representing and confirm the statutory powers they are exercising and for what purpose.

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# Core Principles of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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## iii. Risk Prioritisation

Farm Regulators will:

- use a risk based approach to identify and prioritise farm businesses that may require visits
- share risk assessments and agree risk principles to use as best practice when reviewing farm business for visit selection
- use risk based visit selections in accordance with relevant EU and UK legislation



# Core Principles of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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## iv. Targeted Approach to Farm Visits

- Farm Regulators will work towards ensuring that any data and intelligence gathered is used effectively to target high risk areas and activities and non-compliant farm businesses. This will reduce the regulatory burden on low risk and compliant farmers
- Farm Regulators will ensure that regulatory resources are directed at non-compliant businesses which may increase visits to certain individuals or sectors, as appropriate



# Core Principles of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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## v. Earned Recognition

Farm Regulators will:

- where appropriate, approve and adopt “Earned Recognition” Farm Assurance Schemes in order to reduce the need for or frequency of visits to farms
  - use information from Farm Assurance Schemes to improve risk based selection, reducing the need for or frequency of inspections to compliant farmers
  - work in partnership with Farm Assurance Schemes to ensure that schemes operate effectively and meet the required standards
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# Core Principles of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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## vi. Competency of Inspectors and Their Conduct

Farm Regulators will always operate in a fair, transparent and proportionate way and this will be achieved by:

- training inspectors to be competent to perform the required tasks during any visit
  - providing inspectors with an official identity (ID) card which will be produced when entering the farm premises or whenever asked to prove identity. Inspectors will outline the purpose of the visit and inspections taking place, what information they require and the estimated length of the visit.
  - ensuring inspectors take all appropriate biosecurity measures before entering and leaving premises to prevent the spread of disease
  - where appropriate expecting inspectors to be accompanied throughout the visit by the owner/keeper/manager/responsible person of the premises/animals
  - reviewing the training needs and Continuous Professional Development requirements of their Inspectors on an annual basis; and making sure Inspectors receive relevant on-going development to ensure they remain fully up to date and competent
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# Core Principles of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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## vii. Alternative Intervention Types

Where appropriate Farm Regulators will use alternative interventions to replace a physical farm visit, for example:

- phone calls, Emails , Letters / postal record checks
  - business self-assessment (e.g. questionnaires, surveys)
  - making use of remote sensing technology such as satellites and/or drones
  - desktop assessments using analysis of data or intelligence received
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# Core Principles of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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## viii. Data Sharing

When handling information about persons being regulated, Farm Regulators will share information securely amongst themselves:

- following the principle of “collect once, use many times”
- so long as such data sharing is reasonable and proportionate for the purposes of regulation and in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998



# Core Principles of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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## ix. Best Practice

Farm regulators will look to continually improve how they operate by sharing best practice around their approach to regulation and the means to achieve compliance with legislation.



# Working together in partnership with Farm Regulators

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## As a farmer we ask you to:

Support Farm Regulators to minimise the disruption caused to your working day. To ensure the inspection runs smoothly and is completed successfully we ask the farming community to support us with the following:

- follow any guidance on how to prepare for each inspection
- for any announced inspections ensure that you or your authorised representative is available to meet the inspector on the agreed date and time
- cooperate with the inspectors to ensure that the inspection is completed successfully
- ensure that you have up-to-date, complete and accurate records available at the time of inspection
- ensure that you make the inspector aware of any special biosecurity measures in place at your farm, before they arrive or on arrival
- provide adequate facilities for the inspector to meet biosecurity and Health and Safety obligations, including basic hand washing and boot cleaning facilities, when appropriate
- provide a safe working environment to enable the inspector to carry out their inspection safely
- ensure that any farm buildings, structures or equipment that farm regulators may need to use or inspect are safe and in good working order, for example livestock handling facilities
- liaise with inspectors where any issues are found, discuss potential solutions and agree on any actions you may need to take
- ensure that you have responded to any correspondence from Farm Regulators in order to resolve any queries
- Inspectors will be professional and fair when they deal with you. In return we ask you to respect our staff. Threatening, abusive or violent behaviour is not acceptable and will not be tolerated

Further information about who will inspect your farm and what they're looking for:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/farming-inspections>

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# Monitoring the effectiveness of the Farm Regulators' Charter

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The Farm Regulators' Charter sets out the steps intended to demonstrate that Farm Regulators are providing an effective and efficient service which minimises the regulatory impact on compliant businesses.

Farm Regulators want to provide an efficient and effective service and feedback is required to evaluate the success and to identify areas for improvement.

Farmers can provide feedback on their own personal experience of a visit by a Farm Regulator or provide more general comment and suggestions for different ways of working (anonymously if you wish) by contacting:

## **Defra Rural Services helpline**

Telephone 03000 200 301

Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm

Find out about call charges at <http://www.gov.uk/call-charges>

Please provide details of the Farm Regulator it concerns. This will allow the feedback to be passed onto the relevant regulator to take forward. Farmers can ask for a follow up response to their feedback.