

Cross-compliance events prove a big success

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Teagasc, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) held a number of cross-compliance Clinics throughout the country over the last number of months.

Personnel from both organisations made short presentations at each event followed by a series of individual clinics covering various topics where farmers and their families with specific issues or problems could speak to advisors or Department officials to get advice or guidance. Events were advertised locally by Teagasc and the various farm organisations.

Sinead Mulcahy, assistant agricultural inspector in DAFM's Integrated Controls Division, said that these events provide DAFM with an opportunity to engage with farmers and to assist them in furthering their knowledge and understanding of the cross-compliance inspection process.

"We hope that by providing information on the areas where most non-compliances occur on farms, we will help farmers to mitigate against them and, ultimately, result in a reduced number of monetary sanctions being applied," says Sinead.

In addition to a DAFM presentation, farmers also had an opportunity to engage with DAFM officials and Teagasc advisors through one-to-one consultations, enabling them to ask questions pertinent to their own individual circumstances.

Topics covered by the DAFM presentation included the number of inspections carried out, how farmers are selected for inspection, the notice period provided prior to inspections and the main areas where non-compliances occur on farms.

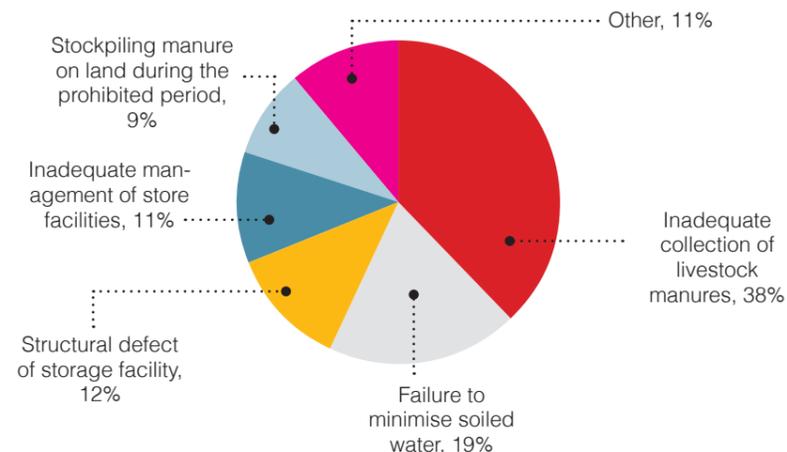
The main areas where non-compliances occur include nitrates; where issues such as the inadequate collection of organic fertiliser, inadequate management of storage facilities and structural defects of storage facilities are common breaches.

Bovine identification and registration (IDR) is another area where breaches commonly occur, mainly associated with missing tags, and registration/notification issues. Similar breaches arise in bovine IDR where again missing tags is a common area where breaches occur along with census errors and flock register issues.



Martin O'Shea, Gathabawn, and Lar Sweeney, Johnstown, discuss cross compliance with Terry Carroll at a meeting on the topic in Kilkenny.

Nitrates breach distribution 2016



Severe poaching of land by cattle, noxious weeds and the removal of landscape features such as hedges are also common areas where breaches arise under the Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC) standards.

Avoid penalties

Teagasc advisors showed how best to avoid penalties by calculating the correct amount of storage required for slurries, soiled water and farmyard manure, as well as the need for farmer involvement.

They also showed what was needed to complete a fertiliser plan for the farm, especially a derogation plan.

Plant protection products were discussed in great detail especially how,

and where, to store chemicals and what records are required.

The events were very well attended with over 200 people at some venues. Survey results show that farmer feedback from those attending was very positive with many indicating that this type of meeting consisting of short presentations followed up by access to staff an excellent way of receiving information.

Many also found that being able to discuss their individual issues on the night was very useful for them.

Following on from this series of meetings it is planned to hold a further round of events around the country in the autumn/winter period of 2018/19. Look out for dates locally.

10 TIPS

Avoiding a cross-compliance problem

- 1 Talk to your advisor/consultant about cross-compliance and what is required.
- 2 Familiarise yourself with the DAFM booklet explanatory handbook for cross-compliance requirements sent to farmers in 2016.
- 3 Attend information meetings on the topic and don't be afraid to ask a consultant/advisor if you think you have a problem. Speak to other farmers if you know them to have had an inspection.
- 4 Check Teagasc and DAFM websites for information.
- 5 Understand and follow your fertiliser/nutrient management plan.
- 6 Continually check farm structures to make sure they are leak-proof and that clean water is not mixing with soiled water and slurries.
- 7 Keep on top of bovine and ovine registration, eg missing tags, flock register, dispatch docket and census dates.
- 8 Keep adequate records, eg animal remedies, pesticide application records, feed and fertiliser receipts.
- 9 Know the difference between eligible land and ineligible features on BPS. Make sufficient deductions if applicable.
- 10 Retain and maintain landscape features and they may only be removed if replaced in advance.