

Detailed guide: Chicken breeders: poultry testing for salmonella

Updated: Sampling instructions and confirmatory testing details updated. References to DARD changed to DAERA.

Testing is part of the national control programme (NCP) for salmonella. The NCP aims to control salmonella in poultry flocks across the EU.

Who must take samples and test

If you keep breeding chickens, you must take samples for testing if you have 250 or more birds.

You're breaking the law if you do not follow these rules.

Your flock does not need testing if either of the following apply:

- you only produce hatching eggs or day-old chicks for scientific or research purposes
- you have fewer than 250 breeding birds (in total, over a 12-month period)

You must send samples for testing to a UK approved laboratory. Choose from:

- [laboratories approved by the Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs \(Defra\) under the Salmonella NCP](#) if you're in England, Scotland and Wales
- laboratories approved by the [Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(DAERA\)](#) if you're in Northern Ireland

Work out how many flocks you must test

You must sample each of your flocks. A flock is a group of birds that shares the same air space, for example a chicken house or range.

If you need help working out how many flocks you have, you can ask for advice from:

- the [Animal and Plant Health Agency \(APHA\)](#) if you're in England, Scotland or Wales
- [DAERA](#) if you're in Northern Ireland

You need to decide how many flocks you keep, so you collect all the samples you must take. If your birds form one flock, they'll all be treated as belonging to a positive flock if sampling gives a positive result. Your decision about whether you have one or more flocks could affect how official disease controls affect your business for certain salmonella results.

Register your flocks and hatchery before you get them tested

You must register each premises where you keep your flocks on:

- [APHA's Great Britain \(GB\) Poultry Register](#) if you're in England, Scotland or Wales
- [the Northern Ireland Poultry Register](#) if you farm in Northern Ireland

You must register your hatchery if it can incubate 1,000 or more eggs. You must also state which species of poultry will be hatched at your hatchery. If the species you hatch changes, you must tell the organisation which holds your registration details.

When you must not sample

Avoid taking samples during or shortly after giving antimicrobials (antibiotics) that affect salmonella. APHA or DAERA could declare your flock positive for salmonella if either of the following apply:

- inspectors see from the flock medicine book that you've given antibiotics
- the laboratory suspects that there may be disinfectant or antibiotics affecting your samples

Contact one of the following for guidance on when to test after giving antibiotics:

- the vet who prescribed them
- [APHA](#) if you farm in England, Scotland or Wales
- [DAERA](#) if you farm in Northern Ireland

Check your laboratory can test samples within 96 hours

Do not collect samples unless your approved laboratory can start testing them within 96 hours (4 days) of you taking the samples. Make sure it can test your samples within 96 hours of taking them if you post them. You may have problems if it receives them on a Thursday, Friday or public holiday.

You'll need to collect more samples if they're delayed in the post, or the laboratory cannot start testing within 96 hours.

Pay for sampling equipment and tests

You need to buy your own sampling equipment. Contact one of the following to find out where you can buy the equipment you need:

- your vet
- the approved laboratory you plan to use
- [APHA](#)
- [DAERA](#)

You'll also have to pay laboratory charges for:

- your own samples
- [annual APHA or DAERA samples \(known as routine official control samples\)](#)

Contact [DAERA](#) for details of fees in Northern Ireland.

Take samples from your rearing flock

You must take samples at all of the following times:

- on the day the chicks arrive from a hatchery
- when they are 4 weeks old
- 2 weeks before you move them to the laying unit

Samples to send on the day of arrival

You must send the following for laboratory testing on the day of arrival:

- the liners from boxes used to deliver the chicks – one box for every 500 chicks from each delivery (up to 10 boxes)
- any chicks that are dead on arrival, or that you cull within 24 hours of arrival (up to 60 carcasses from each hatchery)

Samples to send when the birds are older

You must take samples when the birds are 4 weeks old, and again 2 weeks before you move them to the laying unit. You can choose either of these types of samples:

- [2 pairs of boot swabs](#) for floor-reared birds
- [25 grams \(g\) of a composite faeces sample](#) for cage-reared or floor-reared birds (composite means the faeces are from many birds in the flock)

How to take composite faeces samples from your rearing flocks

Select sites:

- to represent the whole building for cage-reared hens
- from all parts of the buildings floor-reared hens in the specific flock go into

Follow these instructions.

1. Take several 1g samples from the sites you've selected – use a spatula or your hand inside a plastic glove or a plastic bag.
2. Mix the 1g samples together to make a composite sample.
3. Take 25g from the composite sample to send to the laboratory.

Use this table to find out the minimum number of 1g samples you need to take.

Number of birds kept in building	Minimum number of faeces samples
1 to 24	A number equal to the total number of birds up to a maximum of 20 birds.
25 to 29	20
30 to 39	25
40 to 49	30
50 to 59	35
60 to 89	40
90 to 199	50
200 to 499	55
500+	60

Samples to send from adult breeding flocks

You must sample your adult breeding flocks at least every 3 weeks during the laying period. This is known as operator sampling. An official sample can replace an operator sample.

You must use one of these types of samples:

- [5 pairs of boot swabs](#)
- one pair of boot swabs and [one dust sample](#)
- [2 composite faeces samples](#) of 150g each

The exception is when your flock has tested positive for a salmonella strain covered by the NCP (also known as a regulated serotype or serovar). In this case, testing must be at least every 2 weeks. The regulated strains are:

- Salmonella enteritidis
- Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium)
- Salmonella hadar
- Salmonella infantis
- Salmonella virchow

Prepare to take samples

Take samples in the existing bedding – do not put new bedding down.

Gather all the equipment you'll need before you go into the laying house to prevent contamination. Take care to avoid contamination if you keep other animals (especially pigs or cattle) on your premises.

To prevent disinfectant or sanitiser affecting your sample, you:

- should not use hand sanitiser on your plastic gloves
- should put on your plastic overboots after you've walked through disinfectant

If you wear plastic overboots when you walk through disinfectant, you should put on another pair afterwards to protect the boot swabs from the disinfectant.

How to take boot swab samples

You should use:

- disposable plastic overboots
- 5 pairs of boot swabs
- tap water or bottled still water for moistening boot swabs – do not use sparkling water or water treated with antibacterial agents or acids
- disposable plastic gloves
- sealable bags or sample pots
- packaging for sending your sample bags or pots to the laboratory

Follow these instructions.

1. Take 5 pairs of boot swabs from each flock.
2. Moisten the boot swabs with water before you take samples – the water must be sterile and not contain any antibiotics (antimicrobials) or sanitisers.
3. Divide the house into 5 equal parts for sampling, and use one pair of boot swabs in each part.
4. Take at least 100 steps with each pair of boot swabs, walking round the entire house.
5. Drag your feet on the floor to pick up as much material as possible.
6. If the house is divided into several pens, spend more time in the larger pens and less in the smaller pens.
7. When you've finished sampling, take the boot swabs off and turn them inside out carefully so that the faeces you've collected stay on them.
8. Put 2 pairs of boot swabs together in one package and 3 pairs together in another package to send to the laboratory.

How to take dust samples

Choose one of these ways of taking a dust sample:

- collect 100g of dust from multiple places in the house and put it in a pot
- use one or more moistened fabric swabs with a total surface area of at least 900 square centimetres (sq cms)

Follow these steps if you use moistened fabric swabs.

1. Put on new disposable gloves.
2. Coat both sides of the swabs with dust collected from multiple places in the house.

Avoid collecting dust from feeding systems.

You must package dust swabs separately from boot swabs.

How to take composite faeces samples from caged flocks

If you've installed dropping belts or scrapers in your cages, use these instructions.

1. Run the belts or scrapers on the day you collect samples to make sure that you pick up fresh faeces.
2. Take faeces from every row or tier of the cages.
3. Take faeces from the build-up on scrapers and at the end of belts.
4. Collect the samples using a spatula or your hand inside a plastic glove or a plastic bag.

If you have a step-cage system without belts and scrapers, collect faeces from throughout the deep pit. If you collect composite faeces from droppings pits, then collect at least 20 pinches of fresh surface material from each row of manure. Make sure the material you collect is representative of the whole house. The number of individual faeces samples of 1g is given in the following table – up to 300 depending on the size of the flock. The table shows the number of individual 1g samples needed to make one composite sample.

Number of birds in the building	Minimum number of 1gram faeces samples to be taken in the house or building
250 to 349	200
350 to 499	220
450 to 799	250
800 to 999	260
1000+	300

You must send 2 samples of at least 150g each to the laboratory. 150g is equivalent to the quantity of faeces contained in a standard coffee mug tightly packed to the brim with fresh, moist faeces. You can weigh your samples before dispatch to check you have collected a sufficient quantity.

Place the samples in a pot or sealable bag to send to the laboratory. If each sample weighs less than 150g, the laboratory will not carry out the testing and you'll have to send more samples.

How to label samples

You must label each sample. On each label, you must include:

- the date you took the sample
- your registration number, your County Parish Holding (CPH) number, or DAERA flock number
- the identification of the flock – house name or number and the month and year you moved the flock into that house
- the name and address of the flock's premises
- the age of the flock
- the number of birds in the flock
- the contact details of the person sending the sample

Send samples to a laboratory

You should send your samples on the day you collect them. Refrigerate your

samples at 2 to 8°C if you cannot send them on that same day. You must not freeze samples.

Make sure the laboratory can start testing your samples within 96 hours of sampling. You'll need to send more samples if your samples are delayed, or the laboratory cannot meet the testing deadline.

You must send your samples to laboratories approved by either:

- [DAERA](#) if you're in Northern Ireland
- [Defra](#) if you're in England, Scotland and Wales

Tell APHA or DAERA before moving birds to the laying unit

You need to contact APHA or [DAERA](#) at least 2 weeks before you move birds to the laying unit, and give the dates when:

- you'll be moving the flock to the laying unit
- you think the flock is likely to stop laying

To tell APHA, contact:

Customer Service Centre: One Health Worcester

Email: csconehealthgeneral@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 03000 200 301

Fax: 01905 768 649

Worcestershire County Hall

Spetchley Road

Worcester

WR5 2NP

Official sampling at your premises

In Northern Ireland, DAERA will visit your premises to take official samples. In England, Scotland or Wales, the officials will be from APHA (possibly your vet if authorised to take official samples on behalf of APHA).

You'll be charged for these visits. An official sample can replace an operator sample. [See official sampling fees for England, Scotland and Wales](#). Contact [DAERA](#) for details of fees in Northern Ireland.

When you need to have official sampling 3 times in a flock's lifetime

This will happen if testing in the last year on your premises gives positive results for:

- Salmonella enteritidis
- Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium)
- Salmonella hadar
- Salmonella infantis
- Salmonella virchow

You'll need official sampling:

- within 4 weeks of a flock moving to the laying unit or house
- in the middle of lay
- within the last 8 weeks of egg production

When you need to have official sampling twice in a flock's lifetime

This will apply if testing in the last year on your premises does not find:

- Salmonella enteritidis
- Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium)
- Salmonella hadar
- Salmonella infantis
- Salmonella virchow

If this is the case, you'll only need samples taken near the beginning and near the end of lay.

Get your test results

The laboratory usually sends the results to:

- the person who sent the sample
- the person the sampled flock is registered to
- APHA or DAERA if the sample tests positive for salmonella

If your samples test positive for salmonella

Use this section to understand the actions and restrictions that could apply to your flocks and premises. APHA or DAERA will assess positive tests for non-vaccine regulated salmonella strains.

Contact [APHA](#) or [DAERA](#) if you have evidence suggesting contamination of the original sample.

If APHA or DAERA suspect the original result is a false positive, they'll collect official confirmatory samples to confirm the presence of:

- Salmonella enteritidis
- Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium)
- Salmonella hadar
- Salmonella infantis
- Salmonella virchow

APHA or DAERA will also take 5 carcasses and store their organs when they collect confirmatory samples. These may be used to test for the presence of antibiotics if the confirmatory test is negative.

Positive tests for Salmonella enteritidis or typhimurium

If testing confirms the presence of Salmonella enteritidis or Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium), you must:

- keep the flock that tested positive and its eggs on the farm
- make sure that the entire flock is slaughtered as soon you're told to do this
- make sure you arrange the destruction of all the eggs put in the hatchery since infection was found in the flock

Positive tests for other regulated strains

If testing confirms the presence of the following types of salmonella, you must make a plan with your vet and APHA or DAERA:

- Salmonella hadar
- Salmonella infantis
- Salmonella virchow

This will help you to reduce or eliminate salmonella from the flock.

Actions you must take

You must:

- increase your biosecurity measures to prevent the spread of salmonella
- thoroughly clean and disinfect the affected house
- take samples after the thorough cleaning and disinfection

You can only move new birds into the house if the results of the tests on the post-cleaning samples are negative.

APHA or DAERA may check your hatchery to see if salmonella has become established there. In Northern Ireland, DAERA will check back in 6 weeks.

When a flock has a positive result

Once APHA or DAERA identifies at least one flock as positive, their officials will take samples from every other flock on your premises.

A government vet will also visit your premises to give advice on salmonella control. In Northern Ireland, contact [DAERA](#) or your private vet for advice.

Officials will also visit and sample soon after a new flock is placed in the house which they identified as positive.

You will not have to pay for:

- official sampling of other flocks on your premises
- testing the new flock following its move to the house which officials identified as positive

Future actions you must take

You must take NCP samples every 2 weeks for the 12 months after the identification of a positive result for non-vaccine strains of:

- Salmonella enteritidis
- Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium)
- Salmonella hadar
- Salmonella infantis
- Salmonella virchow

The 12 months start from the date when the house, where the positive flock lived, was disinfected.

Compensation

When a government organisation requires your birds to be culled, it will pay compensation for them as long as you follow its instructions.

Compensation only applies if your flock tests positive for Salmonella enteritidis or Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium).

Keep records

Keep records for at least 2 years. Officials may check your records at any time.

Keep test records

You must record all of the following information each time you take samples:

- the date and time you took the sample
- the flock identification – this is the flock's house name or number, and the month and year the flock moved into the house
- type of sample, such as boot swabs or dust sample
- age of the flock
- the date you plan to have the flock slaughtered
- the laboratory that tested the sample
- the test result

Keep movement records

You need to record any movement of birds to or from your premises. For each movement, record the:

- date of movement
- number of birds
- age of the birds
- house name or number, and the month and year the flock moved onto your premises
- address that the birds moved from (including the building name or number)
- address that the birds moved to (including the building name or number)

Food chain information (FCI) documents for abattoirs

You must declare the:

- most recent NCP test result
- date of sampling

You must do this in the FCI documents you send to the abattoir for your flock.

If you plan to market meat from your birds as fresh meat, you must declare if this flock had an earlier positive NCP test result. You must do this even if the most recent NCP test result was negative. You must declare all previous NCP salmonella positive results.

The FCI is a legal requirement. Birds may not be slaughtered for human consumption without this information. If the birds are culled on farm and disposed of as animal by-products, you do not need to provide FCI.

Get advice

If you need more advice, contact [APHA](#) or [DAERA](#).

You can also read the [code of practice for prevention of salmonella in breeding flocks](#) (PDF, 63.4KB, 26 pages)

, which provides best practice for preventing salmonella.

Detailed guide: Turkey breeders: poultry testing for salmonella

Updated: Sampling instructions and confirmatory testing details updated. References to DARD changed to DAERA.

Testing is part of the national control programme (NCP) for salmonella. The NCP aims to control salmonella in poultry flocks across the EU.

Who must take samples and test

If you keep breeding turkeys, you must take samples for testing if you have 250 or more birds at any time in a 12-month period.

You're breaking the law if you do not follow these rules.

You do not have to test a flock if you farm fewer than 250 breeding turkeys in a 12-month period.

You must send samples for testing to a UK approved laboratory. Choose from:

- [laboratories approved by the Department for the Environment and Rural Affairs \(Defra\) under the Salmonella NCP](#) if you're in England, Scotland and Wales
- laboratories approved by the [Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs \(DAERA\)](#) if you're in Northern Ireland

Work out how many flocks you must test

You must sample each of your flocks. A flock is a group of birds that shares the same air space, for example a poultry house or range.

If you need help working out how many flocks you have, you can ask for advice from:

- the [Animal and Plant Health Agency \(APHA\)](#) if you're in England, Scotland or Wales
- [DAERA](#) if you're in Northern Ireland

You need to decide how many flocks you keep, so you collect all the samples you must take. If your birds form one flock, they'll all be treated as belonging to a positive flock if sampling gives a positive result. Your decision about whether you have one or more flocks could affect how official disease controls affect your business for certain salmonella results.

Register your flocks and hatchery before you get them tested

You must register each premises where you keep your flocks on:

- [APHA's Great Britain \(GB\) Poultry Register](#) if you're in England, Scotland or Wales
- [the Northern Ireland Poultry Register](#) if you farm in Northern Ireland

You must register your hatchery if it can incubate 1,000 or more eggs. You must also state which species of poultry will be hatched at your hatchery. If the species you hatch changes, you must tell the organisation which holds your registration details.

When you must not sample

Avoid taking samples during or shortly after giving antimicrobials (antibiotics) that affect salmonella. APHA or DAERA could declare your flock positive for salmonella if either of the following apply:

- inspectors see from the flock medicine book that you've given antibiotics
- the laboratory suspects that there may be disinfectant or antibiotics affecting your samples

Contact one of the following for guidance on when to test after giving antibiotics:

- the vet who prescribed them
- [APHA](#) if you farm in England, Scotland or Wales
- [DAERA](#) if you farm in Northern Ireland

Check your laboratory can test samples within 96 hours

Do not collect samples unless your approved laboratory can start testing them within 96 hours (4 days) of you taking the samples. Make sure it can test your samples within 96 hours of taking them if you post them. You may have problems if it receives them on a Thursday, Friday or public holiday.

You'll need to collect more samples if they're delayed in the post or the laboratory cannot start testing within 96 hours.

Pay for sampling equipment and tests

You need to buy your own sampling equipment. Contact one of the following to find out where you can buy the equipment you need:

- your vet
- the approved laboratory you plan to use
- [APHA](#)
- [DAERA](#)

You'll also have to pay laboratory charges for:

- your own samples
- [annual APHA or DAERA samples \(known as routine official control samples\)](#)

Contact [DAERA](#) for details of fees in Northern Ireland.

When you need to take samples

Follow this guidance for rearing and adult flocks.

When to collect samples for your rearing flock

You must take samples at all of the following times:

- on the day the poults (young turkeys) arrive from a hatchery
- when they are 4 weeks old
- 2 weeks before you move them to the laying unit

When to collect samples for your adult flock

You must regularly test each breeding flock as part of the NCP. You can do the sampling:

- at the hatchery – you must sample adult flocks every 3 weeks
- on your farm

For on-farm sampling, you can sample every 4 weeks. The exception is when your flock has tested positive for a salmonella strain covered by the NCP (also known as a regulated serotype or serovar). In this case, testing must be at least every 3 weeks. The regulated strains are:

- Salmonella enteritidis
- Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium)

You must use one of the following types of sampling methods. You can choose from the methods that apply to your flocks. You can use a different choice of method each time you have to take samples.

Choose a hatchery sampling method

Choose one of the following ways to take samples:

1. [Take an eggshell sample.](#)
2. [Send hatcher basket liners](#) that are visibly soiled – but check that your laboratory accepts your type of hatcher basket liner.
3. [Use fabric swabs.](#)

If there are more than 50,000 eggs from one flock in the hatchery, you must take 2 sets of samples for that flock.

How to take hatchery samples

Make sure you include 80% of the eggs from the flock you're sampling. To do this, you must collect samples from enough hatcher containing eggs produced by the flock to reach this proportion.

You should gather the plastic gloves, plastic bags and packaging you'll need before you go into the hatchery. This is to prevent contamination before, during and after sampling.

Option 1: take an eggshell sample

1. Before sampling, check that the laboratory you plan to use can accept your liners. (Some laboratories will not be able to accept certain types of hatcher liners.)
2. Put on 2 new pairs of plastic gloves.
3. Take at least 10 grams (g) of broken eggshells from each of 25 hatcher baskets.
4. Crush and mix them thoroughly in a strong plastic bag.
5. Make sure that the bag and your gloves aren't damaged to avoid any contamination that could lead to a false positive result.
6. Put 25g of the crushed mixture into a pot to send to the laboratory.

Option 2: take a hatcher liner sample

You must send 10 poult box liners per flock per hatchery source with all the contents. The contents should include: unhatched eggs, eggshells and all poults found dead or culled (killed) on arrival.

1. Put on a new pair of plastic gloves.
2. Choose at least one square metre (sq m) of hatcher basket liners from 5 hatcher baskets that have contained eggs from the flock you need to sample.
3. Put the liners from different flocks into separate plastic bags to send to the laboratory.

Option 3: take a hatcher fluff and dust sample

1. Put on a new pair of plastic gloves, ensuring that there is no contamination with disinfectant.
2. Use a fabric swab that has an area of at least 900 square centimetres (sq cm).
3. Moisten the swab with tap water or still bottled water – do not use sparkling water or water treated on the farm with antibacterials or acid.
4. Carry out the swabbing as soon as the poults (young turkeys) have been removed and before you start cleaning.
5. Swab fluff and dust from 5 different places, including the floor of the hatcher.
6. Swab from the whole area of the bottom of at least 5 different hatcher baskets.
7. Make sure the swab is completely covered on both sides.

8. Put the swab into a sealable bag to send to the laboratory.

Sample poults at 4 weeks and 2 weeks before moving them to the laying unit

You can choose to collect samples using these options.

1. Send [5 pairs of boot swabs](#).
2. Send [one pair of boot swabs and one dust swab](#).
3. Take [2 or more hand-held faecal swabs](#) (conditions apply).

Option 1: send 5 pairs of boot swabs

If you do this, you can package your samples in either of these ways:

- put them in 2 separate batches of 5 [boot swabs](#) each
- put 2 pairs of [boot swabs](#) in one bag or pot, and 3 pairs in another bag or pot

Option 2: send one pair of boot swabs and one dust swab of 900sq cm

You must package the [boot swabs](#) and [dust swab](#) separately.

Option 3: take 2 or more hand-held faecal swabs with a total surface area of 900sq cm

You may only use this option if you cannot use boot swabs and have fewer than 100 turkeys at the time of sampling. You must package the swabs in 2 separate containers or bags.

Samples to send for adult breeding birds

Once you've moved birds into the laying unit, you must do one of the following:

- take samples from them on your premises
- sample their eggs in the hatchery

You must take samples on the premises from breeding turkeys that lay hatching eggs that you sell to farms in other EU member states.

You must take samples every 3 weeks if:

- you have the eggs from your breeding birds sampled at a hatchery
- there has been *Salmonella enteritidis* or *Salmonella typhimurium* on your premises in the last 12 months

You can take samples at least every 4 weeks if you meet all the following conditions:

- you sample your breeding birds on your premises rather than sampling

their eggs at a hatchery

- there has been no *Salmonella enteritidis* or *Salmonella typhimurium* on your premises in the last 12 months

If you're sending breeding birds to slaughter for human consumption, collect samples and get the result in time to send it with them to slaughter.

For birds that will be slaughtered at:

- less than 101 days old, you must collect samples in the 3 weeks before slaughter (unless they're organic turkeys)
- more than 100 days old (or are younger but organic), you must collect samples in the 6 weeks before slaughter

You can take samples on your premises in the following ways as long as you meet the conditions for each type of sample. Make sure you follow the packaging instructions for the type of samples you take.

Option 1: take 5 pairs of boot swabs

You can package the [boot swabs](#) in one of these ways:

- in 2 separate batches of 5 boot swabs each
- 2 pairs of boot swabs in one bag or pot, and 3 pairs in another bag or pot

Option 2: take one pair of boot swabs and one dust swab of 900sq cm

If you do this, you must package the [boot swabs](#) and the [dust swab](#) separately.

Option 3: take 2 or more hand-held faecal swabs with a total surface area of 900sq cm

You may use the [hand-held faecal swabs](#) option if you cannot use boot swabs and have fewer than 100 turkeys at the time of sampling. You must package the swabs in 2 separate batches.

Samples you can have taken from the hatchery (to test your adult breeding flock)

One of these types of samples can be chosen:

- a total of 1 square metre (sq m) of liners that are visibly soiled, taken from 5 hatcher baskets
- fabric swabs with a total surface area of 900sq cm from 5 places in the hatcher – this should include at least one sample from the floor of the hatcher
- fabric swabs with a total surface area of 900sq cm from the whole surface of the bottom of at least 5 different hatcher baskets
- 10g of broken eggshells from each of 25 hatcher baskets, making 250g broken eggshells in total

You must arrange to have 2 sets of samples taken for each flock which has more than 50,000 eggs in the hatchery.

How to take a boot swab sample

Follow these instructions to make sure your approved laboratory accepts your samples and you comply with the NCP.

Prepare to take a boot swab sample

You should use:

- disposable plastic overboots
- 5 pairs of boot swabs – these must be absorbent enough to soak up moisture – you can also use tubegauze ‘socks’ or pre-moistened commercial swabs
- tap water or bottled still water for moistening boot swabs – do not use sparkling water or water treated with antibacterial agents or acids
- disposable plastic gloves
- sealable bags or sample pots
- packaging for sending your sample bags or pots to the laboratory

Take samples in the existing bedding (litter) – do not put new bedding down.

You should gather all the equipment you’re going to need before you go into the turkey house to prevent contamination before, during and after sampling. You should take special care to avoid contamination if you keep other animals (especially pigs or cattle) on your premises.

To prevent disinfectant or sanitiser affecting your sample, you:

- should not use hand sanitiser on your plastic gloves
- should put on your plastic overboots after you’ve walked through disinfectant

If you wear plastic overboots when you walk through disinfectant, you must put on another pair afterwards to protect the boot swabs from the disinfectant.

Take a boot swab sample

1. You should sample only the inside of the house.
2. Avoid sampling the areas just inside doors and pop holes, as they may have been contaminated by material from outdoors.
3. Moisten the boot swabs before you take samples by pouring water inside them or shaking them in a container of water.
4. You can either just collect boot swabs or a mixture of boot swabs and dust samples.

Only collecting boot swabs (option 1)

1. If just collecting boot swabs, you must take 5 pairs of boot swabs from

each flock.

2. Divide the house into 5 equal parts for sampling, and use one pair of boot swabs in each part.
3. Take at least 100 steps in each pair of boot swabs, and swab every part of the house.
4. Drag your feet on the floor to pick up as much material you can.
5. If the house is divided into several pens, spend more time in the larger pens and less in the smaller pens

Collecting boot swabs and dust samples (option 2)

If collecting a combination of boot swabs and dust sample, take one pair of boot swabs from each flock.

1. Walk around the entire house in that pair of boot swabs, taking at least 100 steps.
2. Swab every part of the house.
3. Drag your feet on the floor to pick up as much material as you can.
4. If the house is divided into several pens, spend more time in the larger pens and less in the smaller pens.

When you've finished sampling

1. Take off the boot swabs and turn them inside out so that all the faeces you've collected stay on them.
2. Put 2 pairs of boot swabs in one bag, or pot, and 3 pairs in another bag or pot. (Or put 5 boot swabs in one container and the other 5 in the second.)
3. Once in the appropriate container, package the samples together and send them to the laboratory.
4. If collecting one pair of boot swabs with a dust sample, put both boot swabs in one bag or pot – put the dust swab in a second bag or pot.

How to take a dust sample

Follow these instructions to make sure your approved laboratory accepts your samples and you comply with the NCP.

Prepare to take a dust swab

You should use:

- one or more swabs – the total area of the swab or swabs must be at least 900sq cm
- tap water or bottled still water for moistening swabs – do not use sparkling water or water treated with antibacterial agents or acids
- disposable plastic gloves
- sealable bags or sample pots
- packaging for sending your sample bags or pots to the laboratory

You should gather all the equipment you're going to need before you go into the turkey house, to prevent contamination before, during and after sampling.

You should take special care to avoid contamination if you keep other animals (especially pigs or cattle) on your premises.

To prevent disinfectant or sanitiser affecting your sample, you should not use hand sanitiser on your plastic gloves.

You should collect the plastic gloves, swabs, plastic bags and packaging that you'll need before you go into the house. This is to prevent contamination before, during and after sampling.

Take a dust swab

1. Put on new plastic gloves – make sure you don't contaminate them with disinfectant.
2. Open out the hand-held dust swab – the total area of the swab must be at least 900sq cm.
3. Moisten the dust swab using tap water or bottled still water – do not use sparkling water or water treated with antibacterial agents or acids.
4. Swab at least 20 different places around the house including ledges, partitions, ventilation grills and anywhere else dust has settled. (Do not take samples from feeding systems.)
5. Make sure that both sides of the swab are completely covered with dust.
6. Package the swab and dust into a sealable bag or pot to send to the laboratory.

How to take hand-held faecal swabs

Follow these instructions to make sure your approved laboratory accepts your samples and you comply with the NCP.

Prepare to take faecal swabs

You should use:

- at least 2 hand-held swabs – the total area of all the swabs you use must be at least 900sq cm
- tap water or bottled still water for moistening swabs – do not use sparkling water or water treated with antibacterial agents or acids
- disposable plastic gloves
- sealable bags or sample pots
- packaging for sending your sample bags or pots to the laboratory

You should gather all the equipment you're going to need before you go into the turkey house, to prevent contamination before, during and after sampling. You should take special care to avoid contamination if you keep other animals (especially pigs or cattle) on your premises.

To prevent disinfectant or sanitiser affecting your sample, you should not use hand sanitiser on your plastic gloves.

Take a faecal swab

Collect the plastic gloves, swabs, plastic bags and packaging that you'll need before you go into the house. This is to prevent contamination before, during and after sampling.

1. Put on new plastic gloves – make sure you don't contaminate them with disinfectant.
2. Open out the hand-held dust swabs. (You must use at least 2 swabs – the total area of all the swabs must be at least 900sq cm.)
3. Moisten the swabs using tap water or bottled still water – do not use sparkling water or water treated with antibacterial agents or acids.
4. Thoroughly swab the pen area, the floor and any perches in several different areas where faeces have built up.
5. Make sure that both sides of the swab are completely covered in faeces.
6. Place the swabs into 2 sealable bags or pots to send to the laboratory – make sure you follow these batching instructions, so the laboratory accepts your samples.

How to label samples

You must label each sample. On each label, you must include:

- the date you took the sample
- your registration number, your County Parish Holding (CPH) number, or DAERA flock number
- the identification of the flock – house name or number and the month and year you moved the flock into that house
- the name and address of the flock's premises
- the age of the flock
- the number of birds in the flock
- the contact details of the person sending the sample

For hatchery samples, add the name of the hatchery and the hatcher machine number.

Send samples to a laboratory

You should send your samples on the day you collect them. Refrigerate your samples at 2 to 8°C if you can't send them on that same day. You must not freeze samples.

Make sure the laboratory can start testing your samples within 96 hours of sampling. You'll need to send more samples if your samples are delayed, or the laboratory cannot meet the testing deadline.

You must send your samples to laboratories approved by either:

- [DAERA](#) if you're in Northern Ireland
- [Defra](#) if you're in England, Scotland and Wales

Official sampling

Officials will take a routine official sample in the lifetime of the flock. They'll either visit your premises to do so or collect the official sample at the hatchery you use.

In England, Scotland and Wales, routine official samples may be taken by an:

- APHA official
- authorised vet
- auditor from the independent control body (if your flock is registered with the Red Tractor turkey assurance scheme)

In Northern Ireland, an official from DAERA will take samples.

For breeding flocks that are on the premises, officials will sample when the birds are aged between 30 and 45 weeks. Alternatively the official sample may be taken at hatchery. This sample will be of eggs laid by the flock that are hatching. The sampled eggs must have been laid when the birds were aged between 30 and 45 weeks. The routine official sample (whether collected at premises or hatchery) can count as one of the operator samples you must take when your adult turkeys are in lay.

You'll be charged for these visits. [See fees for England, Scotland and Wales](#). Contact [DAERA](#) for details of fees in Northern Ireland.

Officials from APHA or DAERA can also visit to take samples:

- if *Salmonella enteritidis* or *Salmonella typhimurium* has been detected in another flock or in a previous crop of flocks on your premises
- from all the flocks on your premises if a positive test for *Salmonella enteritidis* or *Salmonella typhimurium* at the hatchery you use has been traced to one of your flocks
- from flocks where there's no evidence of testing
- in cases where the competent authority (APHA or DAERA) considers it appropriate

Get your test results

The laboratory usually sends the results to:

- the person who sent the sample
- the person the sampled flock is registered to APHA or DAERA if the sample tests positive for salmonella

If your samples test positive for salmonella

Use this section to understand the actions and restrictions that could apply to your flocks and premises.

What happens if a hatchery sample tests positive

APHA or DAERA will take samples when eggs hatched in a hatcher test positive for either:

- Salmonella enteritidis
- Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium)

They'll take samples from the flocks on your premises that produced these eggs. The hatchery owner or an official may have collected the original positive hatcher sample. If officials confirm a non-vaccine strain of Salmonella enteritidis or Salmonella typhimurium in your flock, you must:

- keep your positive flock(s) and eggs laid by birds on the farm
- arrange for the slaughter all the birds in the positive flock(s)

APHA or DAERA will contact you to discuss the arrangements for slaughtering all the birds in the positive flock(s). They'll also contact you to discuss destroying all hatching eggs that might be infected (including those already at the hatchery).

(APHA or DAERA may also place the hatchery under a movement restriction. The hatchery owner will only be allowed to move equipment, animals, eggs or animal products to, or from their hatchery with a licence from APHA or DAERA. Officials may also carry out an audit of the hatchery, including tests to see if salmonella has become established there. APHA or DAERA will only lift the hatchery movement restrictions after effective cleansing and disinfection have been demonstrated by sampling.)

What happens if a sample from a breeding premises tests positive

APHA or DAERA will assess positive tests for non-vaccine strains Salmonella enteritidis or Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium).

Contact [APHA](#) or [DAERA](#) if you have evidence suggesting contamination of the original sample.

If APHA or DAERA suspect the original result is a false positive, they'll collect official confirmatory samples to confirm the presence of:

- Salmonella enteritidis
- Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium)

APHA or DAERA will also take 5 carcasses and store their organs when they collect confirmatory samples. These may be used to test for the presence of antibiotics if the confirmatory test is negative.

APHA or DAERA will contact you to tell you what you have to do. This will include all of the following:

- keeping the birds and eggs from the positive flock(s) on your farm
- having your positive flock or flocks slaughtered

- make sure you arrange the destruction of all the eggs put in the hatchery since infection was found in the flock

You will not have to pay for any samples or testing carried out by APHA or DAERA because of a positive test result.

Official samples from other flocks on your premises

Once APHA or DAERA identifies at least one flock as positive, their officials will take samples from every other flock on your premises.

A government vet will also visit your premises to give advice on salmonella control. In Northern Ireland, contact [DAERA](#) or your private vet for advice.

Officials will also visit and sample when a new flock is placed in the house where the last flock had a positive test result. You will not have to pay for:

- official sampling of other flocks on site
- testing the new flock following its move to the house which officials identified as positive

Future actions you must take

You must take NCP samples every 3 weeks for the 12 months after the identification of a positive result for either non-vaccine strains of:

- Salmonella enteritidis
- Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium).

The 12 months start from the date when the house where the positive flock lived was disinfected.

Compensation

When a government organisation requires your birds to be culled, it will pay compensation for them as long as you follow its instructions.

Compensation only applies if your flock tests positive for Salmonella enteritidis or Salmonella typhimurium (including monophasic Salmonella typhimurium).

Keep records

Keep records for at least 2 years. Officials may check your records at any time.

Keep test records

You must record all of the following information each time you take samples:

- the date and time you took the sample
- the flock identification – this is the flock's house name or number, and

- the month and year the flock moved into the house
- the type of sample, such as boot swabs or dust sample
- the age of the flock
- the date you plan to have the flock slaughtered
- the laboratory that tested the sample
- the test result

Keep movement records

You need to record any movement of birds to or from your premises. For each movement record the:

- date of movement
- number of birds
- age of the birds
- house name or number, and the month and year the flock moved onto your holding
- address that the birds moved from (including the building name or number)
- address that the birds moved to (including the building name or number)

Food chain information (FCI) documents for abattoirs

You must declare the:

- most recent NCP test result
- date of sampling

You must do this in the FCI documents you send to the abattoir for your flock.

If you plan to market meat from your birds as fresh meat, you must declare if this flock had an earlier positive NCP test result. You must do this even if the most recent NCP test result was negative. You must declare all previous NCP salmonella positive results.

The FCI is a legal requirement. Birds may not be slaughtered for human consumption without this information. If the birds are culled on farm and disposed of as animal by-products, you do not need to provide FCI.

Get advice

If you need more advice, contact [APHA](#) or [DAERA](#).

You can also read the [code of practice for prevention of salmonella in turkey flocks](#) (PDF, 153KB, 31 pages)

, which provides best practice for preventing salmonella.

Statutory guidance: SR2015 No 39: use of waste in a deposit for recovery operations

Updated: Added to 'details' section: You can apply online for most standard rules environmental permits.

These standard rules allow you to store and use waste in a deposit for recovery activities involving construction, reclamation, restoration or improvement of land other than by mobile plant.

These standard rules are for the recovery of waste only and do not apply to any activities involving disposal.

See [waste recovery plans and permits](#) for guidance on how to produce a waste recovery plan to support your application for this standard rules permit.

You can apply online for most standard rules environmental permits.

[Apply for a standard rules environmental permit.](#)

Detailed guide: Waste: environmental permits

Updated: You can now apply online for most standard rules environmental permits.

You may need to apply to the Environment Agency for an environmental permit if your business uses, recycles, treats, stores or disposes of waste or mining waste. This permit can be for activities at one site or for mobile plant that can be used at many sites.

You are breaking the law if you operate without a permit when you should have one.

There is separate guidance on how to [register as a waste carrier](#) if you are a waste transporter, buyer, seller, broker or dealer.

Ways you can meet the requirement

If you are carrying out a waste activity, you can meet the permit requirement using one of the following:

- a 'regulatory position statement' – the Environment Agency does not currently require a permit for that activity
- an 'exemption' – you do not need a permit for the activity, but you must still register your exemption with the Environment Agency
- a 'standard rules permit' – a set of fixed rules for common activities
- a 'bespoke permit' – tailored to your business activities

Check if your activity is covered by a regulatory position statement

A [regulatory position statement \(RPS\)](#) means that the Environment Agency will not normally take enforcement action against you if you have not applied for a permit provided:

- your activity meets the description set out in the RPS
- you comply with the conditions of the RPS
- your activity does not (or is not likely) to cause [environmental pollution](#) or harm human health

Each RPS has an expiry date. You should check with the Environment Agency before this expiry date to make sure they have not withdrawn the RPS. If they have, you may need to register an exemption or apply for a permit for your activity.

Check for an RPS if you are:

- [using waste](#)
- [treating waste](#)
- [disposing of waste](#)
- [storing waste](#)

Check if there is an exemption for your activity

Check for an exemption if you are:

- [using waste](#)
- [treating waste](#)
- [disposing of waste](#)
- [storing waste](#)

If your activity is covered by an exemption you will need to [register it as exempt](#).

Each exemption has specific limits and conditions you need to follow. If you do not, the Environment Agency can cancel or 'deregister' your exemption.

Check if you can get a standard rules permit

You can apply for a standard rules permit if your operation meets the relevant description and rules, but:

- you cannot change (vary) the rules and you have no right of appeal against them
- if you want to change your operations and so will not meet the criteria of the standard permit anymore, you will have to apply to make it a bespoke permit instead
- if there is a change in your local environment after your permit has been issued (for example a change in the definition of a [groundwater source protection zone](#)) you may need to apply to change your permit

Read the standard rules if your activity involves:

- [keeping or transferring waste](#)
- [biological treatment of waste](#)
- [metal recovery or scrap metal](#)
- [materials recovery and recycling](#)
- [recovery or use of waste on land](#)
- [treatment to produce aggregate or construction materials](#)
- [onshore oil and gas exploration and mining waste operations](#)

Applying for a standard rules permit is quicker and costs less than a bespoke permit, but if you do not meet the conditions for the standard rules permits you must [apply for a bespoke permit](#).

How to apply for a standard rules environmental permit

You can apply online for most standard rules environmental permits.

Apply for a standard rules environmental permit.

How to apply for a bespoke permit

You must apply for a bespoke permit if your operation does not fit the conditions of a standard rules permit.

Before you apply you must do all the following:

- check you meet the [legal operator and competency requirements](#) (including technical competency)
- develop a [management system](#) (a written set of procedures that identifies and minimises the risks of pollution)
- complete a [risk assessment](#)
- design your facility to [avoid and control emissions](#)
- check the [technical guidance](#)

If you are applying for a waste recovery permit to permanently deposit waste on land, you must also read the guidance on [waste recovery plans and permits](#).

Bespoke permits: application forms

Download and fill in forms:

- [part A: about you](#)
- [part B2: new bespoke permit](#)
- [part B4: new bespoke waste operation](#) or [part B5: new bespoke mining waste operation](#)
- [part F1: opra, charges and declarations](#)

When you send your application you will need to include:

- forms part A, part B2, part B4 or part B5, and part F1
- the summary of your management system
- your risk assessment
- any other supporting documents mentioned in the form guidance, for example site maps and plans
- [your fee](#)

Email your completed forms to PSC@environment-agency.gov.uk or post them to:

Permitting and Support Centre

Environmental Permitting Team

Quadrant 2

99 Parkway Avenue

Parkway Business Park

Sheffield

S9 4WF

Get help with your application

The Environment Agency offers basic pre-application advice to help you complete your application. This basic advice is free because the cost of providing it is included in the application charge.

For standard rules, mobile plant and bespoke permits the basic service covers the following advice (where applicable):

- which standard rules set is relevant for your activities
- helping you check that your activity meets the criteria for a standard rules permit

- carrying out nature and heritage conservation screening
- which application forms and guidance to use
- information about any administrative tasks the Environment Agency will need to do

For bespoke permits, the basic service also includes advice about risk assessments you may need to do to accompany your application.

If you need more in depth advice about your application the Environment Agency offers an enhanced pre-application advice service. The enhanced service costs £100 an hour plus VAT. The enhanced service can include face to face meetings and advice on:

- complex modelling
- preparing risk assessments
- parallel tracking complex permits with planning applications
- specific substances assessments
- monitoring requirements (including baseline)

The Environment Agency will give you a written estimate before they start work. This will include:

- a breakdown of the work they will carry out with costs
- when these costs will be charged

Getting pre-application advice will help you submit a good quality application that can be processed (determined) smoothly and quickly. [Complete the pre-application advice form](#) if you want to request either basic (free), or enhanced (chargeable) pre-application advice.

If you cannot access the form please [contact the Environment Agency](#) and they can send you a paper copy to complete and return.

Keeping sensitive information confidential

When the Environment Agency [consults on your permit application](#) they will let people see the information in your application.

You can ask the Environment Agency not to make public any information that is commercially sensitive for your business (such as financial information). You can do this by including a letter with your application that gives your reasons why you do not want this information made public.

The Environment Agency will email or write to you within 20 days if they agree to your request. They will let you know if they need more time to decide.

If they do not agree to your request they will tell you:

- how to appeal against its decision
- how to withdraw your application

Fees and charges

You must pay a fee to apply for a permit.

You must send your fee with your application. If your application is successful, the Environment Agency will charge you an annual 'subsistence' fee while you have a permit. This fee depends on your activity and the type of permit you have.

Find out more about [fees and charges](#). You can [contact the Environment Agency](#) for help to work out your fee.

After you apply

The Environment Agency may reject your application if, for example:

- you have not used the right forms
- you have forgotten to include the fee or sent the wrong fee
- you have not provided important information

Once the Environment Agency has the information they need to start assessing your application, they will contact you and tell you that your application is 'duly made'. This means they are starting the assessment process. They may still request more information if they need it to complete their assessment.

Consultations on bespoke permit applications

The Environment Agency will [publish online](#) a notice of your application and instructions for how other people can see and comment on it.

Members of the public and anyone interested in the application have 20 working days to comment.

The Environment Agency may also consult other public bodies, for example local authorities, Public Health England, water companies, and Natural England.

If the Environment Agency considers your application to be of high public interest, they may:

- take longer to give you a decision
- carry out an extra consultation on the draft decision
- advertise the application more widely

The Environment Agency's [public participation statement](#) explains how and why they will consult on permit applications.

Decisions about your permit

You should get a decision on your application within 13 weeks. The Environment Agency will tell you if your application will take longer.

You can appeal if the Environment Agency refuses your application.

You can also appeal if you've applied for a bespoke permit and you're not happy with the conditions.

The decision letter will explain how you can appeal.

The Environment Agency will publish the decision on its [public register](#).

When you get your permit

Find out [how the Environment Agency will regulate you](#) when you start operating.

If you have been issued a mobile plant permit the Environment Agency must agree to the deployment of the plant before you operate. Deployment forms for standard rules permits are available on the same page as the standard rules themselves.

Apply to deploy mobile plant for bespoke activities using [form MPD1](#).

Change, transfer or cancel your permit

When you have got your permit, you can:

- change (vary) the details on it
- transfer it to someone else
- cancel (surrender) it

Find out how to [change, transfer or cancel your permit](#).

Contact the Environment Agency

Contact the Environment Agency if:

- you need help with your application
- you're not sure if you need a permit

General enquiries

National Customer Contact Centre
PO Box 544
Rotherham
S60 1BY

Email
enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Telephone
03708 506 506

Telephone from outside the UK (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm GMT)
+44 (0) 114 282 5312

Minicom (for the hard of hearing)
03702 422 549

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm

[Detailed guide: Discharges to surface water and groundwater: environmental permits](#)

Updated: The 'Decisions about your permit' section has been updated to: 'You will normally get a decision on your application within 4 months.' This is because 4 months is the statutory determination period in the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016.

You may need an environmental permit if you discharge liquid effluent or waste water (poisonous, noxious or polluting matter, waste matter, or trade or sewage effluent):

- into surface waters, for example, rivers, streams, estuaries, lakes, canals or coastal waters (known as water discharge activities)
- onto or into the ground, for example, land spreading waste sheep dip, or discharging treated sewage effluent to ground via an infiltration system (known as groundwater activities)

You need to apply to the Environment Agency for a permit for any standalone water discharge or groundwater activity – standalone means the activity is not part of a waste operation, installation or mining waste operation.

If your water discharge is part of one of these operations, you can make the discharge part of your [installation permit](#) or [waste or mining waste permit](#).

You're breaking the law if you operate without a permit if you should have one.

When you do not need a permit

You do not need a permit:

- to discharge uncontaminated water, for example, clean rainwater from roofs or small areas of hardstanding to surface water

- to discharge uncontaminated water collected from public roads and small parking areas (that's been through a maintained oil separator or sustainable urban drainage system) to surface water
- for certain low-risk groundwater activities, known as [groundwater activity exclusions](#)

For more information about the Environment Agency's position on protecting groundwater, see [Groundwater protection position statements](#). Position statement G12 on page 29 explains when you do not need a permit for discharge of clean roof water to ground.

Discharges in sewered areas

You should discharge your waste water to the public foul sewer whenever it's reasonable to do so. You do not need an environmental permit to do this.

You must consult your sewerage undertaker before you:

- make a new connection to the public sewer
- discharge anything other than [domestic sewage](#)

Permits in sewered areas

The Environment Agency will not give you a permit for a private sewage treatment system if it's reasonable for you to connect to the public sewer.

If the distance from the boundary of your site to the nearest public sewer is less than the number of houses multiplied by 30 metres, you must show the Environment Agency why it's not reasonable to connect to the public sewer. In some cases, we may ask you to consider connecting to the public sewer if it's more than the number of houses multiplied by 30 metres away. [Contact the Environment Agency](#) to discuss your proposal before you apply for a permit.

You will need to:

- tell us how much it will cost to connect to the nearest public sewer
- give us a formal response from your sewerage undertaker
- tell us the cost of the private sewage treatment system you want to use

When we assess whether it's reasonable for you to connect to the public sewer we take into account:

- the comparative costs of connecting to public sewer and installing a private sewage treatment system
- any physical barriers that would prevent you connecting to the public sewer
- any environmental benefits that would arise from installing a private sewage treatment system such as the reuse of treated effluent

If you're planning a new development, plan your foul sewerage at an early stage and consult with the local authority and sewerage undertaker.

We will not normally give you a permit if you want to use a private sewage

treatment system because there's not enough capacity in the nearest public sewer. If necessary, you must agree improvements to the existing sewerage network, in order to allow connection, with the sewerage undertaker. These improvements must be put in place before the development is occupied. This aligns with [planning practice guidance](#) and the [building regulations](#).

Disputes over connection to the public sewer

Your sewerage undertaker may have a [duty to provide a first time sewerage scheme](#) if:

- your existing sewerage system is causing or is likely to cause an adverse effect on the environment or amenity which cannot be solved by repair or maintenance
- the new system will serve more than one property
- providing a public sewer is the most appropriate solution

Check the guidance for your activity

Your water discharge or groundwater activity may meet the conditions for an exemption from environmental permitting or a standard rules permit. For more information read the relevant guidance for:

- [septic tanks, cesspools or small sewage treatment plants](#) unless you have a package treatment plant and [meet the requirements of the standard rules permit](#)
- [open-loop heat pump systems](#)
- [dewatering building sites and other excavations](#)
- [discharging substances as part of a groundwater tracer test or remediation scheme](#)
- [cutting vegetation in or near inland freshwaters](#)

You'll need to apply for a [bespoke permit](#) if none of the above apply to you.

[Contact the Environment Agency](#) if you're not sure if you need a permit.

Type of waste water: domestic sewage or trade effluent

As part of your permit application, or to know whether your activity qualifies for an exemption, you will need to classify your waste water. Read more about [when your waste water is classed as domestic sewage](#).

Standard rules permits for package treatment plants

You may be able to apply for a [standard rules permit](#) if you operate a package treatment plant for secondary treatment of domestic sewage.

Your package treatment plant must discharge between 5 and 20 cubic metres of domestic treated sewage to surface water daily (for example, your plant treats sewage from a small hotel or bed and breakfast, not a single

household). If your sewage discharge to surface water is less than 5 cubic metres per day and you meet [the general binding rules](#), you do not need a permit.

Your operation must meet the description and rules, but:

- you cannot change (vary) the rules and you have no right of appeal against them
- if you want to change your operations and so will not meet the criteria of the standard permit anymore, you'll have to apply to make it a bespoke permit instead
- if there's a change in your local environment after your permit has been issued (for example, a change in the definition of a [groundwater source protection zone](#)), you may need to apply to change your permit

Applying for a standard rules permit is usually quicker than a bespoke permit. If you do not meet the conditions for the standard rules permits you must [apply for a bespoke permit](#).

Apply for a standard rules permit

Before you apply for a standard rules permit you need to:

- read the [permit conditions](#) to make sure you can comply with them
- read the instructions in the application form and form guidance
- complete and submit the [nature and heritage conservation screening form](#) before you submit your application – so the Environment Agency can check if any conservation sites, protected species or habitats could be affected by your activity
- read the [generic risk assessment](#) so you can understand the potential risks and make sure you manage them effectively
- check you meet the [legal operator requirements](#)
- develop a [management system](#) – a written set of procedures that identifies and minimises the risks of pollution

Standard rules permits: application forms

Download and fill in these forms:

- [part A: about you](#)
- [part B1: standard facilities permit](#)
- [part F1: charges and declarations](#)

Send your completed forms and [application fee](#) to PSC-WaterQuality@environment-agency.gov.uk or post them to:

Environment Agency Permitting and Support Centre

Environmental Permitting Team

Quadrant 2

99 Parkway Avenue

Parkway Business Park

Sheffield

S9 4WF

Find out about:

- [getting help with your application](#)
- [keeping sensitive information in your application confidential](#)
- [what happens after you apply](#)

Before you apply for a bespoke permit

You need to:

- develop a [management system](#) (a written set of procedures that identify and minimise the risks of pollution)
- check whether you need to complete a [risk assessment](#)
- plan how you'll [control and monitor emissions](#)

If you're a water company or NAV (new appointments and variations) you must follow the guidance relevant to your activity:

- [waste water treatment works: treatment, monitoring and compliance limits](#)
- [water companies: water treatment works discharge limits for environmental permits](#)
- [water companies: chemical dosing at waste water treatment works](#)
- [water companies: operator self monitoring \(OSM\) environmental permits](#)
- [water companies: environmental permits for storm overflows and emergency overflows](#)

Specific substances assessment

When you apply for a permit you'll need to tell the Environment Agency if your discharge will contain specific substances.

If your discharge contains specific substances your risk assessment will need to include a specific substances assessment.

Find the [list of surface water specific substances in the surface water pollution risk assessment guide](#).

For discharges to groundwater, a specific substances assessment is needed for hazardous substances and non-hazardous pollutants. This does not include discharges that only contain or are only likely to contain ammoniacal nitrogen, ammonium and suspended solids. Find the [list of hazardous substances and non-hazardous pollutants for groundwater](#) on the Water Framework Directive UK TAG website.

Apply for a bespoke permit

Standalone water discharge and groundwater activity permit (not open-loop heat pump systems)

Download and fill in forms:

- [part A: about you](#)
- [part B2: general new bespoke permit](#)
- [part B6: new bespoke water discharge and groundwater activity](#)
- [part F1: charges and declarations](#)

Open-loop heat pump systems

Download and fill in forms:

- [part A: about you](#)
- [part B8: apply for an environmental permit and full abstraction licence](#)
- [part F1: charges and declarations](#)

Standalone groundwater discharges with spreading activities permit

Download and fill in forms:

- [part A: about you](#)
- [part B2: general new bespoke permit](#)
- [part B7: waste sheep dip, waste pesticide washings or other waste](#)
- [part F1: charges and declarations](#)

Send your application

When you send your application you'll need to include:

- the relevant forms
- the summary of your management system
- your risk assessment if you've been required to do one
- any other supporting documents mentioned in the form guidance, for example, site maps and plans
- your [fee](#)

Email your completed forms to PSC-WaterQuality@environment-agency.gov.uk or you can post them to:

Environment Agency Permitting and Support Centre

Environmental Permitting Team

Quadrant 2

99 Parkway Avenue

Parkway Business Park

Sheffield

S9 4WF

Get help with your application

The Environment Agency offers basic pre-application advice to help you complete your application. This basic advice is free as the cost of providing it is included in the application charge.

For standard rules and bespoke permits the basic service covers the following advice (where applicable):

- which standard rules set is relevant for your activities
- helping you check that your activity meets the criteria for a standard rules permit
- carrying out nature and heritage conservation screening
- which applications forms and guidance to use
- information about any administrative tasks the Environment Agency will need to do

For bespoke permits, the basic service also includes advice about risk assessments you may need to do to accompany your application.

If you need more in depth advice about your application the Environment Agency offers an enhanced pre-application advice service. The enhanced service costs £100 an hour plus VAT. It can include face to face meetings and advice on:

- complex modelling
- preparing risk assessments
- parallel tracking complex permits with planning applications
- specific substances assessments
- monitoring requirements (including baseline)

The Environment Agency will give you a written estimate before it starts work. This will include:

- a breakdown of the work it will carry out with costs
- when these costs will be charged

Getting pre-application advice will help you submit a good quality application that can be processed (determined) smoothly and quickly. Complete the [pre-application advice form](#) if you want to request either basic (free), or enhanced (chargeable), pre-application advice.

If you cannot access the form please [contact the Environment Agency](#). It will send you a paper copy to complete and return.

Check that you meet the ‘legal operator’ requirements

You must be the ‘legal operator’ of the water discharge or groundwater activity that you want a permit for.

This means you must have sufficient control of the activity, for example you:

- have day to day control of the activity, including the manner and rate of operation
- make sure that permit conditions are complied with
- decide who holds important staff positions and have incompetent staff removed if required
- make investment and financial decisions that affect the performance or how the activity is carried out
- make sure that regulated activities are controlled in an emergency

You can have contractors carry out activities at your site and remain the operator if you continue to have sufficient control of the activity. But sometimes a contractor may be the legal operator or become the legal operator, based on the tests set out above. A remote holding company is unlikely to have sufficient control.

If you’re no longer the operator you must formally transfer the permit to the person who is the operator. If you continue to operate an activity when you’re no longer the legal operator the Environment Agency may take enforcement action against you or revoke the permit.

You must apply as a ‘legal entity’ that can be legally responsible for the permit and can accept liability, for example:

- an individual
- public limited company
- private limited company
- government body (for example, local authorities, NHS Trusts, Food Standards Agency)
- limited liability partnership

As the operator you’re legally responsible for the activity whether or not it’s in operation.

Your application can be refused if the Environment Agency does not consider you to be the operator or a legal entity.

Joint operators of one activity

If your activity has more than one operator acting together, you need to make one joint application for all the operators. For example if several people jointly operate a treatment plant then they would all be named on the permit.

Keep sensitive information confidential

When the Environment Agency [consults on your permit application](#) it will let people see the information in your application.

You can ask the Environment Agency not to make public any information that is commercially sensitive for your business (for example, financial information). You can do this by including a letter with your application that gives your reasons why you do not want this information made public.

The Environment Agency will email or write to you within 20 days if it agrees to your request. It will let you know if it needs more time to decide.

If it does not agree to your request it will tell you how to:

- appeal against its decision
- withdraw your application

Fees and charges

You must pay a fee to apply for a permit.

You must send your fee with your application. If your application's successful, the Environment Agency normally charge you an annual 'subsistence' fee while you have a permit. This fee depends on your activity and the type of permit you have.

Find out more about [fees and charges](#). You can [contact the Environment Agency](#) for help to work out your fee.

After you apply

The Environment Agency may reject your application if, for example:

- you have not used the right forms
- you've forgotten to include the fee or sent the wrong fee
- you have not provided important information

Once the Environment Agency has the information it needs to start assessing your application, it will contact you and tell you that your application is 'duly made'. This means it's starting the assessment process. It may still request more information if it needs it to complete its assessment.

Consultations on your permit application

The Environment Agency will [publish online](#) a notice of your application and instructions for how other people can see and comment on it.

Members of the public and anyone interested in the application have 20 working days to comment.

The Environment Agency may also consult other public bodies, for example,

local authorities, Public Health England, water companies and Natural England.

If the Environment Agency considers your application to be of high public interest, it may:

- take longer to give you a decision
- carry out an extra consultation on the draft decision
- advertise the application more widely

The Environment Agency's [public participation statement](#) explains how and why it will consult on permit applications.

Decisions about your permit

The Environment Agency will write to you to tell you its decision about whether or not it can allow what you've asked for.

You will normally get a decision on your application within 4 months. The Environment Agency will tell you if your application will take longer.

You can appeal if it refuses your application or if you're not happy with the conditions it has put into your permit. Its decision letter will explain how you can appeal.

The Environment Agency will publish the decision on its [public register](#).

The Environment Agency will not normally change your permit within 4 years of it being issued. However, it may change your permit if:

- you do not meet your permit conditions or environmental standards
- there are changes to legislation

Comply with your permit

After you've been granted your permit you'll need to comply with its conditions.

Find out [how the Environment Agency will regulate you](#) when you start operating.

Change, transfer or cancel your permit

After you have your permit, you can:

- change (vary) the details on it
- transfer it to someone else
- cancel (surrender) it

Find out how to [change, transfer or cancel your permit](#).

Contact the Environment Agency

Contact the Environment Agency if:

- you need help with your application
- you're not sure if you need a permit

General enquiries

National Customer Contact Centre
PO Box 544
Rotherham
S60 1BY

Email

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Telephone

03708 506 506

Telephone from outside the UK (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm GMT)
+44 (0) 114 282 5312

Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm