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**EPR Intensive Farming
Pig and Poultry Assurance Scheme**
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This guidance describes the Pig and Poultry Assurance Scheme and how a farm can join

The Pig and Poultry Assurance Scheme cuts red tape and reduces charges for farmers. It's for pig and poultry producers who are achieving a high standard of compliance with their environmental permit, issued under the Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR, previously known as the Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations, PPC).

Every farm that joins will annually save around £900 off Natural Resources Wales charges and will have only one NRW visit every three years. Certification Bodies (CB) will inspect member farms and collect data for us. Whenever possible, they will do so when carrying out an audit for another scheme, such as Red Tractor Assurance or the Lion Code of Practice, to further decrease the number of visits to farms.

This scheme is voluntary. If you choose not to join we'll continue to inspect and charge you as normal. You can decline to join but join in a subsequent year if your farm remains eligible.

How the scheme works

Once a farm has joined the scheme we'll give its nominated CB a copy of the permit and any variations, enforcement positions and formal notices relevant to permit compliance. The CB will carry out one visit for every year that the farm remains in the scheme. We'll visit once in every three years. Farms that are not in the scheme will be inspected by us at least once each year.

We remain responsible for regulation but the information the CB collects on our behalf will help us to assess whether a farm is complying with its permit. Immediately after the inspection the CB will provide us with the information they have collected; they will leave the same information with the farmer. Your Environment Officer (EO) or area point of contact (APOC) will write to you with our assessment of the findings.

You can continue to contact your local EO at any time for advice, especially when you're considering making changes to your farm.

The benefits of joining the scheme

As a member of the scheme you'll have fewer annual visits to your farm leading to less disruption for you. By reducing the number of visits we need to make, we can reduce the permit subsistence charge by around £900 per year. If you're a member of another scheme, such as Red Tractor Assurance or the Lion Code of Practice, the CB will do both inspections together whenever possible. The CB will charge you for carrying out their visit. It's up to each CB how much they charge but it's likely to be much less than our charge reduction.

Who can join the scheme

To be eligible for the scheme a farm must:

- have had at least two inspections since being permitted
- be well managed, demonstrating compliance with permit condition 1.1

- be implementing all permit improvement conditions in accordance with the approved timescale

To be eligible for the scheme a farm must not:

- have an improvement condition relating to ammonia emissions
- be the subject of any outstanding enforcement action by Natural Resources Wales or its predecessor Environment Agency Wales (see below)
- be operated by someone who has, in relation to that farm, received a conviction in the previous three years for a case brought by Natural Resources Wales or EA Wales, or have accepted a formal caution in relation to such an offence in the previous two years
- have more than ten Compliance Classification Scheme (CCS) points in the previous calendar year
- have any unresolved amenity issues or be a Site of High Public Interest
- be in arrears for EPR charges

The definition of outstanding enforcement action

Outstanding enforcement action is:

- any formal cautions that have been offered but not accepted
- any prosecutions that are pending or which have begun but which have either:
 - a) not yet gone to court
 - b) have gone to court but the judgement is being appealed
- any notices which have been issued and which have not yet been fully complied with
- activities that led to a warning letter being received including awaiting a decision in respect of enforcement action
- the carrying out of an enforcement response
- carrying out a post-conviction plan

Outstanding enforcement action is not:

- any prosecution that has gone before the court and any fines and costs have been accepted and the verdict of which is not subject to an appeal
- any formal caution that has been offered and accepted
- any notices that have been issued and the conditions contained within them have been fully complied with

How to join the scheme

We assess permitted farms that are not members of the scheme in January each year to see if they're eligible to join. In February/March we'll write to the operators of eligible farms to invite them to join the next scheme year beginning in April. If you wish to join the scheme, you'll need to get in touch with one of the approved CBs specified in the invitation letter. The CBs will provide further details of their procedures and the charges that will apply.

You don't need to be a member of another farm assurance scheme to join this scheme. A farm can only join in February/March of the year that it's eligible so it's ready for the next scheme year beginning in April. You can choose to leave the scheme part way through the year. You'll be liable to pay the higher non-accredited subsistence charge, pro-rata to the date of leaving the scheme.

You don't need to renew your scheme membership every year - your farm remains in the scheme as long as it does not meet any of the criteria for expulsion, or you notify us or your CB of your intention to leave the scheme. Unless you wish to change CB you don't have to contact your CB before the next scheme year, they will contact you to request their annual payment.

If your farm has been transferred to you it can remain in the scheme as long as the next two visits both have a CCS score of 10 points or less. If you vary your permit your farm will remain in the scheme.

If your farm has no livestock and is empty it does **not** need to be visited. An empty farm has a minimal environmental risk and so can remain in the scheme, pay the lower subsistence charge but not be visited. You must let us know when you restock so inspections can begin again.

Farm visit results

We'll write to tell you the results of the visit. If the farm is complying with its permit, no further action will be taken until the next inspection (unless a complaint or an incident is reported that requires a visit).

If there are areas of non-compliance, where you've already agreed a correction plan for all the non-compliances with your EO, you won't need to take any action as a result of the CB's visit. We'll write to confirm this. If there are any areas of non-compliance that are not already dealt with in a correction plan, we'll write specifying the information that's needed. After assessing the information collected by the CB we may decide it's necessary to visit the farm, for example, to address urgent non-compliances and potential/actual incidents. The results of all inspections will be placed on the public register.

A farm can be expelled from the scheme part way through the year

A farm may be expelled if you:

- fail to comply with an enforcement notice
- are prosecuted by Natural Resources Wales
- accept a formal caution for a breach
- fail to pay your EPR charges
- fail to have an annual CB visit or fail to cooperate reasonably with the CB, for example, to arrange visits, provide access to relevant areas and records, or if you refuse to pay for the CB visit
- fail to make improvements to rectify non-compliance within agreed timescales (Natural Resources Wales may exercise discretion where there are extenuating circumstances) or refuse to agree reasonable timescales

A farm may be expelled if the farm:

- scores more than 30 CCS points during a CB or EO visit, or has more than 10 breaches in a visit or there is gross failure of permit condition 1.1
- is designated as a Site of High Public Interest because it's generating a lot of public interest (whether for environmental, legal or other reasons)
- scores more than 10 CCS points per visit for the next two visits (one by the CB, one by the EO) after the farm has been transferred from one operator to another operator

If a farm is expelled from the scheme part way through the year, the farm will revert to the higher non-accredited subsistence charge from the date of expulsion. The farm will not be able to be considered eligible to rejoin the scheme until the EO has carried out two more visits and is satisfied that the farm is suitable to return.

Further information

The scheme began on 1 April 2010. It was developed with the NFU and Red Tractor Assurance (previously known as Assured Food Standards), with the support of the National Pig Association, the British Poultry Council and the British Egg Industry Council.

Contact your EO to find out more about joining the scheme. You can download OGN 111 - NRW Pig and Poultry Certified Bodies Inspection Standards, which the CB will use on your visit, from the intensive farming pages on the National Resources Wales web site (www.naturalresourceswales.gov.uk).