

# Restriction on the use of waste gypsum and gypsum from waste plasterboard in animal bedding

## Background

SEPA has agreed a Position Statement<sup>1</sup> for gypsum from waste plasterboard which excludes PAS 109 compliant gypsum from waste controls when sold and made ready for dispatch for use in plasterboard manufacturing, cement manufacturing, or as a soil conditioner.

SEPA has recently become aware that waste plasterboard and waste gypsum is being used as animal bedding, a use which is not excluded from waste controls under the Position referred to above.

As there is currently is no exemption from the requirement for a waste management licence to allow the use of waste plasterboard or waste gypsum as animal bedding, a waste management licence would be required.

However, recent incidents involving the deaths of livestock where waste gypsum had been used as additional absorbent for bedding highlights the serious risk to animal and human health. Any increase in the number of livestock farms using this material as animal bedding will increase the associated risk to animal and human health. It is therefore highly unlikely that SEPA would be able to grant a licence for such an end use because it would breach the guiding objectives of waste legislation.

The disposal of plasterboard, gypsum and gypsum-containing wastes together with biodegradable wastes can lead to the production of high concentrations of hydrogen sulphide gas. Hydrogen sulphide (H<sub>2</sub>S) is both odorous and toxic. The landfilling of gypsum and other high sulphate bearing wastes with biodegradable waste has been prohibited in Scotland for this reason.

It is likely that H<sub>2</sub>S gas will be produced from waste plasterboard and waste gypsum used in animal bedding systems which allow predominantly moist anaerobic conditions to develop. In such circumstances, H<sub>2</sub>S presents a significant risk to animal and human life.

## Regulatory Position

SEPA advises against the use of waste gypsum and gypsum from waste plasterboard in animal bedding on basis that it may present a serious risk to life.

As there are no exemptions in the waste legislation to allow the use of waste gypsum and waste plasterboard as animal bedding, any such uses may be reported to the Procurator Fiscal as an offence under section 33 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.sepa.org.uk/waste/waste\\_regulation/idoc.ashx?docid=a7d553bf-3058-488d-ae4e-86c2653aef8b&version=-1](http://www.sepa.org.uk/waste/waste_regulation/idoc.ashx?docid=a7d553bf-3058-488d-ae4e-86c2653aef8b&version=-1)

SEPA will not agree to the use of plasterboard and waste gypsum as animal bedding until there is clear scientific evidence to demonstrate that it does not pose a risk to livestock, humans and the environment from hydrogen sulphide generation.

SEPA is aware that research into the use of gypsum in different bedding systems may be undertaken and we will review this SEPA Position Statement if and when the results of research become available.

**National Operations Waste Unit**

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