

# Sheep Dipping Code of Practice For Scottish Farmers, Crofters and Contractors

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# 1. Introduction

Sheep dipping can play an important part in the maintenance of good animal welfare. The treatment chemicals used are effective against ecto-parasites but can also be hazardous to the aquatic environment and human health if not used carefully. This sheep dipping code of practice highlights the relevant regulatory requirements and offers advice on how to use dips safely and protect the environment.

## 1.1. Sheep Dipping and the Water Environment

The chemicals used in sheep dips and pour-on treatments are very toxic to the water environment and can have a significant impact on surface and ground waters.

Groundwater is defined as all water which lies below the surface of the ground in direct contact with the soil or subsoil. Groundwater and surface waters are interlinked and the pollution of one can affect the quality of the other. Groundwater is important not only in maintaining river flows and for the wider aquatic environment but is also a very important source of drinking water, particularly in rural areas and for those on private supplies. Many farms and other businesses such as whisky distilleries are dependent on clean groundwater for watering livestock, crop irrigation and food and drink production.

## 1.2. The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011

The [Water Environment \(Controlled Activities\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2011](#) (referred to as CAR) contain a number of rules in respect of sheep dipping activities aimed at helping to protect the water environment. These are listed within [the CAR Practical Guide](#) and the [Farming and Water Scotland – Know the Rules](#) guidance documents. The CAR regulations also allow the application of waste sheep dip to land providing this is carried out in line with a licence issued by SEPA. Complying with CAR in relation to the application to land of waste sheep dip is a requirement of cross compliance – [GAEC 3 The Protection of Groundwater Against Pollution](#).

Using this code will help operators to comply with their legal requirements under CAR and to minimise risks to the water environment.

## 2. Before Dipping

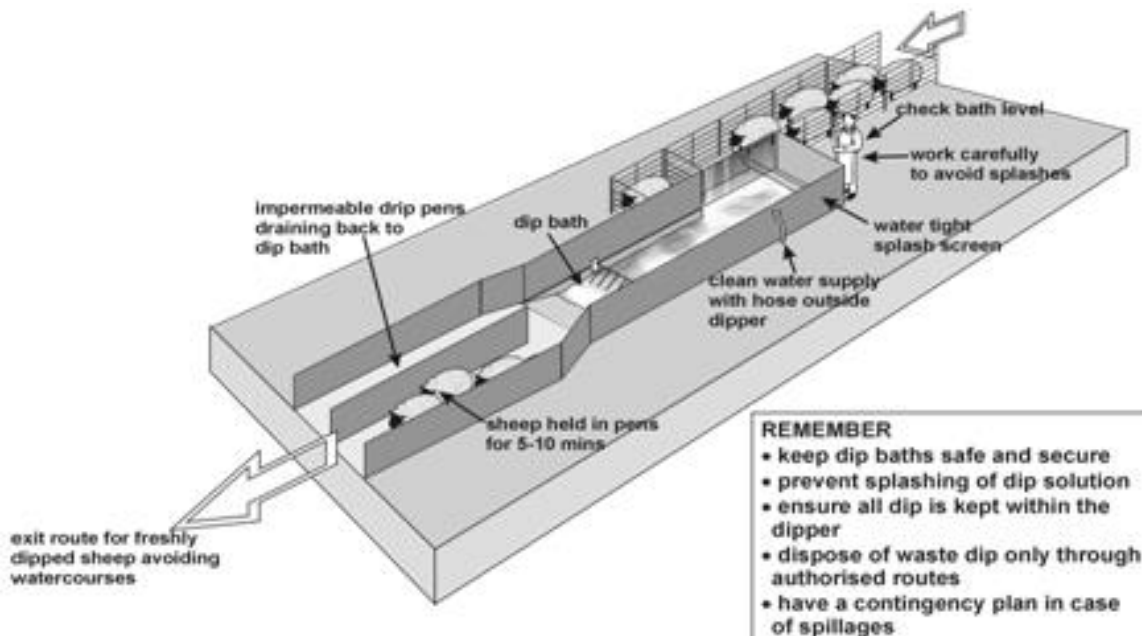
- 2.1 **Plan your treatment and ecto-parasite control programme** – consider if dipping is the most appropriate treatment option. The use of pour-ons or injectable products may be more cost effective in some circumstances. Consider factors such as, number of sheep involved, reasons for treatment. See [SRUC Technical Note TN636](#) for advice.
- 2.2 **Certificate of competence** – To be able to buy sheep dip you must have a 'Certificate of Competence in the Safe Use of Sheep Dip' and those dipping sheep must hold or be under the supervision of a certificate holder. Contact Scottish Skills Testing Service (SSTS) or NPTC for information on obtaining a certificate of Competence.
- 2.3 **Buy and store dip** – Only use dips authorised by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate and only buy as much as you need to avoid having to store dip for long periods of time. Ensure the containers are in good condition, sealed and securely stored preferably in a medicines / pesticide store away from water and where any leaks or spills will be contained. The [HSE](#) provides advice on chemical storage.
- 2.4 **Plan for the disposal of the waste sheep dip** – You must not discharge any waste sheep dip to surface waters or drains. It may be appropriate to dispose of the waste sheep dip to land. To do this you will need to find a suitable site and hold a licence under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011. You can find guidance and an application form on the [Scottish Environment Protection Agency](#) website if you need to apply for a licence. Where you are using a waste disposal company, make arrangements in advance to have the waste dip collected by a registered waste carrier and disposed of legally. If using a sheep dip contractor, establish in advance who is responsible for disposal of the waste dip. Where waste dip is being moved off-farm make sure the contractor is a licensed waste carrier and record movements of waste dip off the farm on a [Waste Transfer Note](#).
- 2.5 **Site Selection** - Mobile dippers, or part of any sheep dipping facility installed after 1 April 2008, or any handling facility used for pour-on treatments constructed after 1 January 2018, must be sited at least 50m away from any ditch, burn, river, loch, wetland, coastal water, well, spring or borehole.

Consider the movements the treated sheep will take after dipping. Sheep must be prevented from having access to any surface water or wetland while there is a risk of transfer of sheep dip or any pour-on treatment from their fleece to such places. Where possible provide a holding area /grass paddock for treated sheep where they can be retained for at least 24 hours after treatment. Holding areas and return routes to grazing

should be chosen to avoid areas close to surface waters or wells and springs. Avoid hard surfaces with drainage to surface waters unless steps can be taken to protect drains. Never traffic dipped sheep through ditches, streams, burns or fords.

## 2.6 Check dipping facilities and in particular ensure:

- Kerbs and splash guards are fitted and that all splashes, spills and run-off will be contained and flow back to the dip bath.
- The bath does not have any cracks or leaks and that any drain holes have been filled in. The sheep dipping facilities must not discharge underground and must not leak or overspill.
- The drip pen floor is impermeable and slopes back to the dipper.
- The drip pen is sufficiently sized to hold the dipped sheep for at least 10 minutes. Provide two drip pens if possible, together with a holding area / grass paddock away from water where sheep can be held for at least 24 hours after dipping.
- There is sufficient access to empty the bath after dipping.



SEPA HOTLINE 0800 80 70 60

## 2.7 Filling the dipper – when filling ensure that dip cannot back-siphon by fitting a double check valve to the fill hose or positioning the hose so that it can't be submerged in the bath.

## 3. During dipping

- 3.1 **Check Forecast** – Rain can wash dip off sheep, avoid dipping if rain is forecast within 24 hours of dipping.
- 3.2 **Mixing dip** – fill the bath with water first before adding dip concentrate. Only measure and mix within the dipping facility so any spills or drips are contained, likewise wash out jugs etc in the drip pen so washings are collected. Take care with on-site storage of dip to avoid containers getting knocked over or damaged. Rinse out empty containers 3 times with clean water into the dipper.
- 3.3 **Containment** – ensure all run-off is contained and flows back to the dip bath:
- Allow dipped sheep adequate time in the drip pen (min 10 minutes), use double drip pens if possible.
  - Take extra care with mobile dippers within the farm steading to ensure run-off does not escape to drains or watercourses – temporarily seal any drains where dip could enter.
  - Where a silt trap is in place between the drip pen and the dip bath ensure it is checked regularly and kept clear.

## 4. After dipping

- 4.1 **Sheep movement** – after leaving the drip pen, treated sheep still pose a risk of causing water pollution. Risks of pollution can be minimised by:
- providing a holding area away from surface waters, wells and springs etc for as long as possible after dipping. This could be a grass paddock with no access to surface waters and springs / wells or a bedded court. The longer they can be kept in the holding area the better but aim for at least 24 hours.
  - Providing a drinking trough to reduce the need for treated sheep to go to surface waters to drink.
  - If transporting treated sheep, use sufficient bedding in the trailer to absorb any drips.
- 4.2 **Empty the dip bath** – wash down the drip pens and any equipment, clothing etc into the bath and empty the bath within 24 hours. Cover the bath to avoid collecting rainwater and reduce the risk of animals or people falling into the dipper. Where waste dip can't be disposed of straight away, store it in a secure and leak proof container well away from surface waters, wells and springs.

If rainwater cannot be prevented from collecting in the dip bath, manage the dipping facilities to ensure there is no overspill. Note even small amount of dip left over after the bath is emptied can have a significant impact if washed to a surface or ground water.

- 4.3 **Waste dip disposal** – waste dip can be disposed of to land in line with a licence issued by SEPA under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 or via a registered waste contractor. Where disposing of waste dip to land under a licence, ensure the conditions of the licence are complied with. This will include ensuring the waste dip is:
- diluted 1:3 with water or slurry prior to spreading
  - spread to the authorised area of land as detailed in the licence once per annum per area.
  - spread evenly and avoid any ponding or run-off. Don't spread to waterlogged or frozen land.

Where a sheep dip contractor is taking responsibility for disposal of the waste dip ensure they are a registered waste carrier and record the movement of dip off the farm using a [waste transfer note](#).

- 4.5 **Container disposal** – Take rinsed out (3 times with clean water into the bath) empty containers to a registered waste disposal site or dispose of via a registered waste contractor.
- 4.6 **Keep records** – Maintain your medicine book and where waste dip is disposed of to land, update your licence disposal records.

## 5. Emergencies

If there is a risk that surface waters or groundwater could be polluted call 0800 80 70 60 immediately.

If a spill occurs try to contain the spillage, never try to wash it away unless the run-off can be collected within the dip bath. Spills of concentrate can be soaked up using sand, sawdust or other absorbent materials.

## 6. References and Further information

[Farming and Water Scotland – Know the Rules Guide, Sheep Dipping](#)

[Cross Compliance – GAEC 3](#)

[HSE 16](#)

[CAR Practical Guide, SEAP. June 2023](#)

[SEPA - Application form for Disposal of waste sheep dip to land. See Form A and Form F and accompanying guidance for Form F.](#)