



Justin Ryan on his farm at Askeaton this week.

(Niall St John)

Challenge to priority claim

ASKEATON farmer Justin Ryan, whose farm has been badly hit by mysterious cattle deaths, has contradicted suggestions that the investigation into the phenomenon is being given "top priority" by the Environmental Protection Agency.

This week he told Farmleader: "As far as we are concerned here there is nothing happening."

He said soil samples and silage samples had been taken but they were the only things.

"They have 12 dead animals got from the farm this year. Some of them they have since February and we have little or no information back about those animals," he declared.

Mr Ryan said all they had received back were the few basic tests which could be carried out at the laboratory in Knockalisheen.

"Apart from that no information has come back about those animals.

"We have looked for photocopies of all lab documentation and we haven't got it," he explained. "I do know they have something done."

Mr Ryan said he had been in contact with Marie Sherwood, assistant director general of the EPA, following an article in last week's Limerick Leader. The article said the agency was giving top priority to the investigation into the animal deaths.

Mr Ryan expressed his dissatisfaction to Ms Sherwood about the position.

"P J O'Connor, the vet with Abbotstown laboratory, rang me back that evening and he asked me to

come out to Knockalisheen this Thursday when he would go through the paperwork with me. But he wasn't inclined to release it to me.

"We want the paperwork in our hands and we haven't got it.

"As far as monitoring is concerned, it is two months since the meeting in Bunratty, and there is no monitor, as of yet, on my farm.

"The EPA were blaming the county council. The council was supposed to make up the hut for it. The hut landed last Thursday but no monitor. I have a hut here now for a monitor and we have no monitor.

"It took two months for the hut to come. How long is it going to take the monitor to come?" he wondered.

"And this is supposed to be getting top priority."

He said he understood that the department claimed to be in contact with

with the farmers in the Askeaton area, who were being affected by the cattle deaths.

"We have had only two contacts from the department," he said. "One about five weeks ago and one about three weeks ago, and we had to go to Dublin three weeks ago ourselves to make the second contact."

Mr Ryan said the matter was not getting top priority. "As far as we are concerned the whole thing has gone backwards," he declared. "They are starting to ignore us again. That is the way we feel about it.

"The promise that day outside in Bunratty was that all documentation would get back to the farmers immediately. That was the promise - that was what we

looked for. That is not happening."

"I have insisted from P J O'Connor that the documents would be released into my hand."

Mr Ryan said he would not attend the proposed meeting with Mr O'Connor this week.

"I want the documents myself and I will take them to an independent person to explain them to me - if they need explaining. I am entitled to those documents and I want them.

"I don't want the department's explanations."

Paul Toner of the EPA told Farmleader he could see no reason why Mr Ryan should not get the results of tests done on his animals.

He said as far as the EPA was concerned there was no intention to deprive Mr Ryan of any data