



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency



VETQAS Newsletter

Proficiency Testing Service

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Contract Renewal - Order your 2018-19 Proficiency Testing Schemes online now.

The new contract year began on 1st April 2018 and you can order your 2018-19 Proficiency Testing (PT) schemes online now.

Participants enabled for online ordering please click here and use your existing username and password to order your PT schemes. Instructions for using our online ordering system can be found here.

If you are a new customer or not yet set up for online ordering or need a reminder of your username or password or if you require help please email us on vetqas@apha.gov.uk.

For further details on all of our PT schemes including prices and distribution dates please see the price list.

We are delighted to announce that in 2018 we have introduced eight new PT schemes. These schemes are:

- PT0042 Ehrlichia canis**
- PT0138 Bluetongue Virus (BTV)**
- PT0187 Brucella PCR**
- PT0185 Microbiology - AST**
- PT0181 Microbiology - Avian**
- PT0182 Microbiology - Bovine**
- PT0183 Microbiology - Ovine**
- PT0184 Microbiology - Porcine**



Once your online order is approved by VETQAS, an invoice will be issued. Full details of how to pay are included on the invoice.

See our terms and conditions.

Further information on VETQAS products and services

Tel: +44 (0)1509 670607

Email: vetqas@apha.gov.uk

Visit: www.aphascientific.com





Image Right: Example of Mucopurulent discharge.

Image Centre: Example of an abscess.

Sore Throat with a Vengeance

Strangles is the name given to an infection in horses (and other equids) caused by the bacterium *Streptococcus equi subspecies equi* (*S. equi*).

Strangles is one of the most frequently diagnosed infectious diseases of horses and is endemic in most parts of the world. Horses that recover from strangles can become carriers of the infection, showing no clinical signs yet harbouring the bacteria in their guttural pouches. Carriers can intermittently shed *S. equi* into their surroundings resulting in new outbreaks.

Strangles is commonly characterised by pyrexia, inappetence, mucopurulent nasal discharge (although signs can be mild) and abscessation of the lymph nodes of the head and neck. In severe cases these abscesses can impair breathing, giving “strangles” its name. The abscesses formed in the retropharyngeal lymph nodes usually rupture internally into the guttural pouches. Incomplete drainage of abscess material leads it to become inspissated, forming chondroids that enable *S. equi* to persist for months or even years in the absence of clinical signs, creating a carrier.

Up to 10% of affected animals may become subclinical *S. equi* carriers. Abscesses can occasionally form in the lymph nodes and body organs distant from the head and neck in a severe condition known as “bastard strangles”.

Guttural pouches can be cleared of infection with removal of inspissated material by flushing and local antibiotic treatment. However efficient identification and treatment of carriers is important for the prevention and eradication of the disease from affected premises.

Traditionally *S. equi* is identified through culturing on selective agar plates with confirmation by further biochemical tests. However, this is a relatively time consuming method, which can be confused by the presence of other β -haemolytic bacteria, especially *S. zooepidemicus* in the sample.

Modern day techniques involve qPCR, targeting highly conserved and specific areas of the *S. equi* genome, providing a very rapid, specific and sensitive test, with results usually available the same day as sample submission.

These methods of screening can be very useful, however the *S. equi* organism rapidly invades the mucosal surface of the lymph nodes to set up an infection, so can escape detection when using single nasopharyngeal (NP) swabs, and carriers may only transmit intermittently. Ideally, multiple sample points would be used over a period of time to most

confidently exclude the presence *S. equi* infection in a horse.

During the last 10 years development of serological ELISA tests to determine the presence of antibodies in the blood raised against *S. equi* antigens can help aid the identification of animals that have been exposed to *S. equi*, with an immune response usually detectable several weeks after infection. If initial ELISA testing gives a negative result, a second blood sample taken 2 weeks later can be used to identify horses that may have been incubating the infection and have seroconverted. If the second sample is also negative and the horse remains clinically free of disease then it can be classed as free of strangles.

Using this method of testing on horses prior to their movement, or as part of a general health screen, can help greatly to reduce the chance of introducing an infected animal or potential carrier into a naïve population. Should serological testing show evidence of anti-*S. equi* antibodies, a follow up of PCR testing on washes taken from the guttural pouches can determine if *S. equi* is present and, if negative, eliminate the horse as a potential carrier.

The presence of chondroids (dried pus) in the guttural pouches has been associated with subclinical inflammation which can continually stimulate the hosts immune response, leading to a prolonged or modified profile of antibody response compared to non-infected animals. Quantification of the serological response over time can therefore be useful in helping to identify persistent carriers that can then be isolated and treated, and so help to break the cycle of infection.

Special thanks to The Animal Health Trust for supplying content and images for this article.

The *Streptococcus equi subsp equi* (Strangles) Proficiency Testing Scheme PT0175 issues two distributions of 5 serum samples twice a year (August & February) at a cost of £370.

APHA is considering providing a Proficiency Scheme for culture and/or PCR of equine β -haemolytic streptococcus including *S. equi equi*, *S. equisimilis* and *S. zooepidemicus*.

If you are interested in either of these schemes please call +44 (0) 1509 670607 or email vetqas@apha.gov.uk



Proud sponsor of Veterinary Vaccinology Networking Congress

APHA Scientific was a proud sponsor at the Veterinary Vaccinology Network fourth annual conference held on the 18 and 19 January at the University of Stirling, Scotland.

It was a pleasure to support and exhibit at the event. The turnout was great despite the snowy weather, with an action packed programme. APHA Scientific enjoyed the opportunity to meet you all and exchange knowledge, and we hope everyone got home safely.

10th International Symposium on Avian Influenza

APHA is hosting the 10th International Symposium on Avian Influenza 'Avian Influenza in Poultry and Wild Birds', at the Grand Hotel, Brighton, UK, from Sunday 15 April to Wednesday 18 April 2018.

The symposium is a high profile international scientific meeting held every three years, alternately in the UK and the USA. The role of the symposium is to bring together scientists, biologists, veterinarians, funders and government regulators from all over the world to exchange and discuss current scientific information on avian influenza.

This symposium will occur at an extremely opportune time given the unprecedented global developments in the expansion of avian influenza both in range and impact across the world in the last 12 months. We anticipate this forum will be an extremely valuable opportunity to reach a broad audience who have an interest in the detection and control of avian influenza in both animals and humans. We expect around 300 delegates will attend the symposium.

The symposium is co-chaired by Ian Brown, APHA, Dr David Swayne USDA, USA and Thijs Kuken, Erasmus Medical Centre, Netherlands. A scientific committee was also formed to organise the programme and manage abstract submissions.

The programme includes 14 sessions on poultry and wild birds.

For further information please visit the symposium website.
We look forward to seeing you in Brighton.



Further information Tel: +44 (0)208 415 2056, Email: conference@apha.gov.uk

APHA Scientific - EAVLD Silver Sponsor

APHA Scientific is a proud sponsor at the 5th European Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians Congress (EAVLD) which will be held on 14-17 October 2018, Brussels.

We very much look forward to the opportunity of meeting our customers. If you will also be there, please come and find us, it would be a pleasure to meet you!

See the WAVLD website to find out more.

Great to see you at the WVPA Congress!

APHA Scientific has returned from a successful exhibition at the XXth World Veterinary Poultry Association (WVPA) Congress,

This congress was an excellent opportunity for the team to promote our commercial products and services to businesses in the industry and professionals in the poultry science research field. WVPA attracted a wide range of delegates from across the globe with numbers exceeding expectations with over 2000 people in attendance.

Alongside the exhibition stands was a rich and varied scientific programme which included workshops, presentations and keynote speakers. Professor Ian Brown Head of Virology from APHA gave a keynote focused on the recent science relating to the H5N8 major epizootic in Europe, Asia and Africa.

Richard Irvine Head of Scanning Surveillance from APHA gave a presentation on integrating qualitative and quantitative data to enhance veterinary scanning surveillance in poultry in Great Britain.

And finally... Thank you to everyone that took part in our coccidiosis competition. We gave delegates the chance to examine a series of slides, to see if they could identify the correct species of Eimeria by the type and location of lesions. Congratulations to Sophia Tang Tze Pei from Rhone Ma who won the Samsung tablet, Sophia was chosen at random from the winning entries.

Bluetongue PT is back

We are excited to announce that PT0138 Bluetongue Virus (BTV) is back on our price list for 2018.

If you would like to order this scheme and you are set up for online ordering please click the orange icon below.

To find more details on this scheme please visit <http://apha.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-scientific/vetqas/PT0138.html>.

**Email: vetqas@apha.gov.uk
Call: +44 (0)1509 670607**



Click here
to order
online

New Microbiology Proficiency Testing Schemes

VETQAS are pleased to announce that in 2018 we are launching new species specific Microbiology Proficiency Testing (PT) schemes.

These are:

PT0181 - Microbiology culture & isolation - Avian

PT0182 - Microbiology culture & isolation - Bovine

PT0183 - Microbiology culture & isolation - Ovine

PT0184 - Microbiology culture & isolation - Porcine

**PT0185 - Microbiology culture & isolation -
Anti-microbial Sensitivity Test**

The samples are freeze dried simulated specimens that contain commonly found (and sometime less common) pathogens.

The microbiology scheme covering a range of species continues to run:

PT0061 - Microbiology culture & isolation - Farm animals

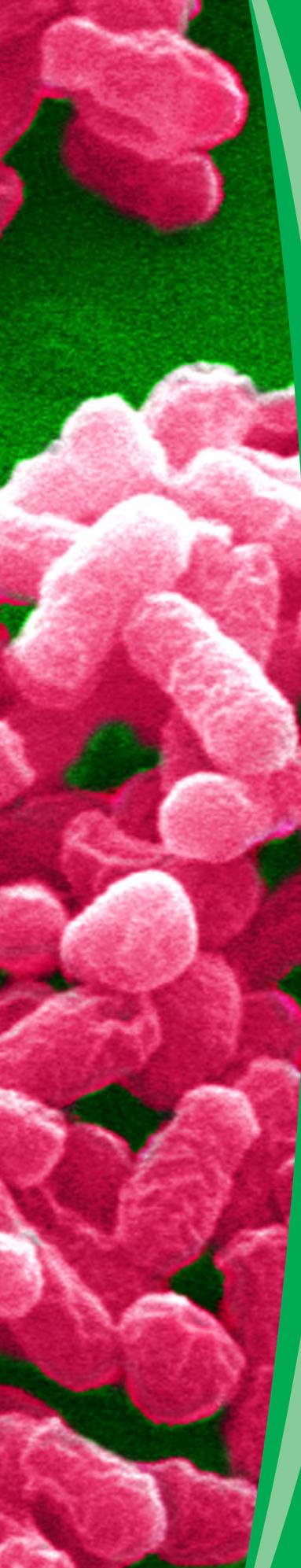
VETQAS is an international market leader in proficiency testing for veterinary laboratories. Taking part in our proficiency testing demonstrates your commitment to improving performance. It provides you with the confidence that your laboratory equipment, staff and methods are delivering quality results for your customers.

Further information on VETQAS products and services

Tel: +44 (0)1509 670607

Email: vetqas@apha.gov.uk

Visit: www.aphascientific.com



APHA awarded funding for brucellosis vaccine development

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has received funding from a global brucellosis vaccine prize competition.

APHA has received \$100,000 in the AgResults' Brucellosis Vaccine Prize competition, aimed at incentivising the development of a vaccine that is effective, safe and viable for use against *Brucella melitensis* in small ruminants across the developing world.

The award is for Phase 1 of the vaccine development and was given based on the agency's scientific soundness, suitable research and appropriate manufacturing capabilities.

The team, led by Dr John McGiven, is now working on Phase 2, by developing a proof of concept vaccine that meets efficacy and safety requirements.

The Brucellosis Vaccine Prize competition is designed, funded and managed by AgResults, and implemented by the Global Alliance for Livestock Veterinary Medicines (GALVmed). The competition has three phases and could run for up to 10 years.

A total of \$30 million is available to entrants, with 3 milestone payments at different stages, potentially adding up to the total of \$26 million for one entrant. See the the competition's website.

Brucellosis is a costly disease that affects many animals including ruminants (for example cattle, sheep, goats and buffalo) and causes abortions, infertility and decreased milk production.

It is endemic in a number of developing countries, and the toll on smallholder farmers in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa is particularly devastating.

Wholesale vaccination of livestock can be a cost-effective way of controlling the disease and limiting its impact on both human and animal health.

However, the existing brucellosis vaccines are not safe or efficacious enough to use effectively in developing countries. Current vaccines are unsafe for use in pregnant animals, have variable efficacy, and can harm humans.

The most protective vaccines also cause cross reactions in diagnostic tests for the disease. A new vaccine that addresses these shortcomings would deliver lasting benefits to human and animal health.

Dr John McGiven, R&D Project Leader at the OIE Reference Laboratory for Brucellosis at APHA said:

We feel the AgResults competition elevates recognition of the significance of this insidious and debilitating disease. For many years we have been focusing on improved methods for the serodiagnosis of brucellosis and this research revealed to us a route towards a new type of vaccine against brucellosis. This competition gave us additional incentive to pull these innovative concepts together in the belief that we can make a big difference to brucellosis control.

Andrew Soldan, Head of APHA Scientific (the commercial services of APHA) said:

I think the prize competition is a fantastic idea; in the discussions I've already had with vaccine companies it has created a level of interest which I think is a testament to the fact that it's already started to have an effect. It's certainly raised the level of interest within the industry, both the research community and the vaccine companies.

To find out more about the award, listen to Andrew Soldan's interview on the competition's website.



Good news on courier charges.

The price of couriers for the shipment of PT samples will remain unchanged in this new contract year.

We understand the financial difficulties faced by many laboratories and hope this will help a little.

NB. Please check the expiry date on your Import Permits so that when required a current permit can be provided to the QA unit well in advance of the parcel postage date.

Appeal for Sourcing Material

The VETQAS Quality Assurance Unit sources materials from wide range of organisations to make our Proficiency Testing possible. We are finding that positive material is becoming scarce as disease management becomes more effective. The materials (positive sera) we are particularly keen to source are those for the following diseases or pathogens:

- Bluetongue virus – antibody positive serum from vaccinated animals, all serotypes
- Ears from persistently infected BVD positive cattle
- Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia (CBPP) antibody positive serum
- African Swine Fever antibody positive serum (PCR negative)
- Transmissible Gastroenteritis antibody positive serum
- Maedi visna/CAE antibody positive serum
- Glanders antibody positive serum
- African Horse sickness antibody positive serum (PCR negative)
- Equine Infectious Anaemia antibody positive serum (PCR negative)
- Equine Viral Arteritis antibody positive serum (PCR negative)
- Babesia caballi antibody positive serum (+ve for CFT/IFAT/cELISA)
- Brucella canis antibody positive serum
- Ehrlichia canis antibody positive serum

**If you have such material available, please contact us on:
vetqas@apha.gov.uk or call +44 (0)1509 670607.**

VETQAS Customer Survey

Thank you for those that have taken the to responded to our Customer Satisfaction Survey.

We appreciate it so much and value the information you have provided. Your responses really do make a difference and will directly contribute to improving our service. So thank you.

Livestock-Associated Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

In recent years, there has been an increase in many European countries in the number of Staphylococcus aureus resistant to methicillin, which have been associated with livestock.

APHA has recently published on a study looking at livestock associated (LA)-MRSA in the UK, which provides detailed genetic analysis of UK isolates analysed by the APHA. <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmicb.2016.01741/full>

VETQAS has since 2009, offered a Proficiency Testing (PT) scheme PT0026 Staphylococci - includes MRSA. Distributions are twice yearly. The scheme is covered by our UKAS scope of accreditation to ISO 17043 – conformity Assessment for Proficiency Test providers.

The primary objective of this exercise being to identify MRSA, however the participants first must correctly identify all staphylococcal strains and determine susceptibility to Cefoxitin. Additionally where performed, results for PBP2 and mecA should be also be reported.

It is important to perform MRSA testing accurately using both phenotypic (e.g. determining PBP2 presence) and genotypic (e.g. PCR for mecA) tests. The VETQAS PT scheme helps customers assess how accurate their tests are in both these aspects, and may help in future detection of presumptive LA-MRSA.

For more information about any of our services please contact 01509 670607 or email aphascientific@apha.gov.uk

APHA Scientific

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) are a world leader for its expertise and knowledge in animal and plant health. APHA Scientific is the commercial department of APHA. APHA Scientific products and services available include:

- Biological reagents and test kits
- Proficiency testing for veterinary laboratories (VETQAS)
- Wildlife management and radar detection
- Laboratory diagnostic testing
- Vaccine development and testing
- Virus discovery
- Pathology and bio-imaging
- Bacterial identification and characterisation
- Veterinary research and development
- Access to Animal and Plant Health Agency intellectual property through licensing.

For more information about any of our services please contact 03000 600001 or email aphascientific@apha.gov.uk



“We will choose VETQAS in the future again, as we appreciate the service and assistance of the team. VETQAS produced a bespoke product tailored to suit our needs. With the excellent support of VETQAS we were able to assess and to improve performance quality of Swiss laboratories in direct detection of Brucella species by staining.”

The full letter from Gudrun can be found [here](#).

Gudrun Overesch Dr. med. vet.: Head of Center of Zoonoses, Bacterial Animal Diseases and Antimicrobial Resistance (ZOBA), University of Bern

Up and Coming PT Schemes

Reminder - The schemes listed below all have a distribution date starting in May.

It is not too late to sign up. Click [here](#) to order our Proficiency Testing schemes, using the password and user name that were emailed to you, when your account was first set up.

If you would like further information on these or any other Proficiency Testing Schemes please call +44 (0)1509 670607 or email vetqas@apha.gov.uk

Scheme Code	Proficiency Testing Scheme Name	Test Method	Delivery Method	Distribution Dates	Key
PT0001	African Horse Sickness (AHS)	ELISA - serum	C	15 May, 13 Nov	▲◇
PT0005	Avian Influenza (AI)	AGIDT / HAIT - serum	C	8 May, 6 Nov	
PT0144	Avian Metapneumovirus (AmPV)	ELISA - serum	C	22 May, 16 Oct	
PT0007	Babesia caballi	IFAT / ELISA / CFT - serum	C	15 May, 13 Nov	▲◇
PT0011	Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD)	ELISA - bulk milk	C	22 May, 21 Aug, 20 Nov, 19 Feb	▲
PT0015		CFT / SAT - serum	C	22 May, 21 Aug, 20 Nov, 19 Feb	▲
PT0016	Brucella abortus	ELISA - serum	C	22 May, 21 Aug, 20 Nov, 19 Feb	▲
PT0020		Rose Bengal test - serum	C	15 May, 14 Aug, 13 Nov, 12 Feb	▲
PT0022	Brucella canis	SAT / RSA - serum	C	15 May, 13 Nov	▲
PT0046	Equine Infectious Anaemia (EIA)	AGIDT - serum	C	15 May, 13 Nov	▲◇
PT0047	Equine Viral Arteritis (EVA)	ELISA / SNT- serum	C	15 May, 13 Nov	▲
PT0049	Glanders	CFT - serum	C	15 May, 13 Nov	▲○
PT0052	Infectious Bovine Rhinotracheitis (IBR)	ELISA - milk	C	22 May, 21 Aug, 20 Nov, 19 Feb	▲
PT0057	Leptospira hardjo	ELISA - bulk milk	C	15 May, 14 Aug, 13 Nov, 12 Feb	▲
PT0059	Maedi visna / CAEV	AGIDT / ELISA - serum	C	22 May, 21 Aug, 20 Nov, 19 Feb	▲
PT0120	Mycoplasma gallisepticum - Chicken	RSA / ELISA - serum	C	29 May	▲
PT0122	Mycoplasma gallisepticum & meleagridis -Turkey	RSA / ELISA - serum	C	29 May	▲
PT0106	Theileria (Babesia) equi	IFAT / CFT / ELISA - serum	C	15 May, 13 Nov	▲
PT0112	Trypanosoma equiperdum (Dourine)	IFAT / CFT - serum	C	15 May, 13 Nov	▲◇
PT0050	Haematology - Ruminant blood	Blood cell counts	C	24 Apr, 29 May, 26 Jun, 24 Jul, 28 Aug, 25 Sep, 23 Oct, 27 Nov, 11 Dec, 29 Jan, 26 Feb, 26 Mar	▲
PT0164	Composting of animal by-products	Isolation / enumeration	C	8 May, 7 Aug, 6 Nov, 5 Feb	
PT0039	E.coli 0157	Isolation & ID from clinical samples	C	8 May, 7 Aug, 6 Nov, 5 Feb	▲
PT0185	Microbiology - Antimicrobial Sensitivity Test (AST)	Culture and AST	C	8 May, 4 Sep, 8 Jan	●
PT0181	Microbiology - Avian	Isolation & ID of animal pathogens	C	8 May, 4 Sep, 8 Jan	●
PT0182	Microbiology - Bovine	Isolation & ID of animal pathogens	C	8 May, 4 Sep, 8 Jan	●
PT0183	Microbiology - Ovine	Isolation & ID of animal pathogens	C	8 May, 4 Sep, 8 Jan	●
PT0184	Microbiology - Porcine	Isolation & ID of animal pathogens	C	8 May, 4 Sep, 8 Jan	●
PT0061	Microbiology - farm animals	Isolation & ID of animal pathogens	C	3 Apr, 8 May, 5 Jun, 3 Jul, 7 Aug, 4 Sep, 2 Oct, 6 Nov, 4 Dec, 8 Jan, 5 Feb, 5 Mar	▲
PT0121	Mycoplasma gallisepticum & meleagridis culture	Isolation & ID	C	29 May	▲
PT0074	Pasteurella multocida toxin detection	Culture & ELISA / PCR	C	8 May, 4 Sep, 8 Jan	▲
PT0179	Salmonella in bulk eggs	Isolation & ID	C	8 May, 6 Nov	
PT0088	Salmonella in poultry	Isolation & ID	C	8 May, 7 Aug, 6 Nov, 5 Feb	▲
PT0084	Salmonella serotyping	Serotyping	C	8 May, 7 Aug, 6 Nov, 5 Feb	

Key	
▲	Accredited by UKAS to ISO/IEC 17043
●	New or updated proficiency testing schemes
◇	Subject to availability and changes to distribution date

* The prices quoted are based on the amount of distributions in the remainder of the year.

New Scheme - Brucella PCR

Brand new scheme for 2018.

PT scheme PT0187 Brucella PCR has been designed specifically for laboratories that deal with Brucella isolates for identification by PCR methods.

The samples provided are of killed cultures from a variety of Brucella species and strains (vaccination and field) including negatives. Participants are able to report results from PCR methods that can identify samples as a...

- Brucella species
- Brucella abortus
- and/or Brucella species and strain.



Click here
to order
online

To find more details on this scheme please visit

<http://apha.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-scientific/vetqas/PT0187.html>

What is Proficiency testing.

The determination of an individual laboratories performance for specific tests or measurements and is used to monitor continued performance.

Proficiency testing may also be known as external quality assessment.

Although a requirement of ISO17025 participation in PT can equally be of benefit to non accredited laboratories. Successful PT performance re-assures internal management that both test methods and laboratories are meeting expectations. Customer awareness of participation in PT gives them added confidence that laboratories are willing to have their testing performance regularly evaluated through proficiency testing.

Key Aims and benefits of PT

- Confirming competent performance
- Confidence in Test Operators & Laboratory Management
- Improving performance
- Comparing PT performance between labs
- Comparing test kits and test sensitivity
- Check repeatability
- Trend analysis (ongoing PT)

Identifying opportunities for improvement.

- An anomalous result should not be considered as a failure by the PT tester or local management.
- An anomalous result may be a trigger to improvement and the introduction of preventive action. Improvements at local level may for example include additional operator training, enhancing internal quality control of data, modification, calibration or replacement of equipment.
- Monitoring PT anomalies may also identify any emerging patterns.

Vetqas adds its 100th scheme to the price list.

We are well into 2018 already and it shows no signs of slowing down. Here at VETQAS we are experiencing growth and have expanded the number of PT schemes on offer.

We're pleased to announce that we have added our 100th PT scheme to our price list. PT0042 - Ehrlichia canis antibody detection by Indirect Fluorescent Antibody test (IFAT).

The samples in this scheme are various dilutions of pooled canine sera collected from diagnostic cases. Negative and duplicate samples may also be included in the panel. Participants in this scheme should report the strength of fluorescence seen, the end point dilution and their interpretation. This scheme will be issued twice a year.

To find more details on this scheme please visit <http://apha.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-scientific/vetqas/PT0042.html>

Or email vetqas@apha.gov.uk or call +44 (0)1509 670607.



Click here
to view our
price list

Staff Spotlight - 60 Seconds with...

What is your name?

Chetna Maisuria

What is your role at VETQAS?

Assistant Scientific Officer

What is the most satisfying part of your job?

Knowing that I am helping laboratories across the world in providing a quality standard in testing.

If you could do any other job what would you be?

I would like to be a Wedding/party planner.

What was your first ever job?

Laboratory technician at APHA

What would you most like to tell yourself at age 13?

Go (a little) nuts!
This is your opportunity in life to be slightly stupid, to make mistakes and to learn. Turns out being a slightly stupid 30 year old isn't as socially acceptable.

What does your ideal weekend involve?

Spending a pampered weekend at a Spa.

What is your personal philosophy?

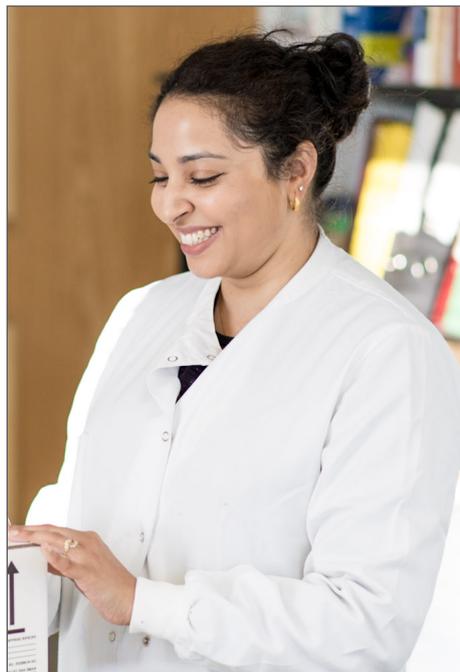
Work for a cause not applause,
Work to express not impress.

What one thing could you not live without?

My iPhone,
I feel lost without it.

What is the best book you have ever read?

Lord of the rings by JRR Tolkien



Where is your favourite place?

Disney World, Florida.
It's so happy!!

If you could spend an hour with a famous person who would it be and why?

I would spend it with Lord Alan Sugar because he is an inspiration to me for his amazing achievements and to acquire knowledge in making lots of money.

If you were stranded on a desert island what 3 things would you take with you?

Survival guide book, insect repellent, large knife.



Linda Retirement

It is with mixed emotions that we announce the retirement of Linda Howgill our Business Administration Manager. Linda has provided us with almost 15 years of devoted service. We don't know how we will get along without her!

Linda's started out her journey as the office administrator back in 2003. Linda will always be remembered for her attention to detail, and meticulous organisation skills. Her willingness to put in extra time and effort to help us meet deadlines has demonstrated a commitment to excellence that we have come to depend upon. In addition to her incredible competence and skill, she has been a friend to all with her thoughtfulness and encouragement.

Linda once received a plaudit from a customer that said 'No wonder your country is called Great Britain with people like Linda in it'.

We made sure that Linda had a well deserved send off by celebrating her retirement with a lunch time celebration. Now that Linda has retired she is looking forward to spending more time with her family. Linda will be busy putting her National Trust membership to good use in the coming months.

Congratulations on your retirement Linda: It has been a pleasure working with you. If you put as much effort into enjoying your retirement as you have all the years you've been working at VETQAS, your retirement will be truly amazing!

Best Wishes from all the VETQAS team x x



Introduction to new members of the team

Jennifer Maycock - Scientist

I completed a BSc in Zoology from University of Wales – Aberystwyth. I started work at APHA in Feb 2003 and worked in Main Lab, Culture Bay, Serology, Bacteriology and Cat III TB Lab over the years, particularly enjoying Bacti. So am pleased to be able to continue with this, albeit from a different angle than previously.

I love animals, especially cats, snakes and birds- worked in small zoo for a while, best job ever had. Prior to starting at Sutton Bonington I had also worked as a Waitress in local pub/restaurant and as a Medical Laboratory Assistant in Leicester Royal Pathology Laboratory which was interesting and very busy.

Have 3 children, ages 8, 5 and 1, who keep us very busy. I also play badminton (including matches) and very involved with local church and I am a Sunday school leader. I enjoy reading and cooking (sometimes) and make homemade chocolates, usually at Christmas or for events.



Bethan Heathcote - Scientist

After leaving school I became an apprentice flat racing jockey for Jack Berry in Lancashire. I had two second place finishes, two fourth, and a lot of unplaced. I also worked for Ginger McCain, trainer of the legendary Red Rum.

After leaving racing behind I studied Small animal care. I worked in a mixed animal veterinary practice for seven years becoming a registered veterinary nurse. I joined APHA (known as VLA at the time) in 2001 making and producing media.

After gaining promotion I worked with the Gamma Interferon testing for bovine TB. I recently transferred to the VETQAS Quality Assurance Unit where I am currently developing my skills and knowledge in this area.