



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

IMPORTS AND EU POLICY TEAM

OVS NOTE 2020/10

25/03/2020

Advice on a temporary contingency official control measure to be taken at Border Control Posts during the COVID-19 outbreak

Purpose

The purpose of this OVS note is to advise Border Control Posts (BCPs) designated for products of animal origin for human consumption (POAO), animal by-products (ABP), and animal feed and high risk food not of animal origin (HRFNAO) that they may accept scanned or electronic documents as a temporary contingency measure during the COVID-19 outbreak.

This measure excludes live animals, germinal products, fresh meat or minced meat and meat preparations of porcine origin where full original documents are still required.

It also excludes live fish and fish products where original documents are still required. We will offer more guidance on these commodities shortly.

Background

1. The European Commission has written to EU member states and the UK, proposing that BCPs accept scanned copies of certificates for third country imports provided that the following applies:
 - Scanned copies are sent by email directly from the third country central competent authorities to the BCP.



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OR

- For third countries using the TRACES-NT platform, certificates and other relevant information can be completed and attached in the TRACES system, although the capacity to provide electronic signatures is not yet operational. Original paper certificates are sent to the BCP, as soon as technically feasible.

The Commission also sent a letter third country missions to the EU, informing them about these measures that Member States and the UK may apply.

2. From the European Commission advice, it has been left up to the discretion of each EU Member State (and the UK is treated as one for these purposes) to decide whether to permit such a temporary solution to ensure less disruption to trade. Defra and the FSA have agreed to allow such **contingency measure to apply to the UK for all POAO, ABP, animal feed and HRFNAO. It does not apply to live animals, including live fish, germinal products, fresh meat or minced meat and meat preparations of porcine origin (ABP or POAO) and fish products.**
3. Scanned signed TRACES CHED/CVED/CEDs or other accompanying documents can be accepted by BCPs only from importers that are subject to travel/staff/office restrictions and are unable to submit original documents to the BCP.
4. BCPs should make a decision to accept scanned or electronic documents based on the operator's past history and reliability, and request a declaration to agree to submit original documents as soon as possible.
5. We have received advice that Peru, Honduras and the Philippines are not able to send hard copy certification at this time. Please accept this will be the case and accept scanned or electronic copies only for low risk consignments and seek advice from the Imports and EU Trade Policy team for higher risk consignments.
6. BCPs should track importer compliance by recording the number of consignments that are affected so that they can be followed up once the situation is resolved. BCPs can further send a letter informing importers that if they do not send the originals when appropriate, the BCP may delay the next consignments SPS clearance until original documents are sent.
7. For imports of live animals, germinal products, fresh meat or minced meat and meat preparations of porcine origin (ABP or POAO) and fish products in which original documents are not able to be submitted to the BCP, the BCP may wish for APHA to review these on a case by case basis in light of evidence received.

8. This situation is going to be reviewed by Defra and FSA based on scientific advice and by liaising with BCPs **on a weekly basis**. Any changes in international disease risk can be managed through this review process and high risk imports can be added.
9. The end date of this temporary measure is unknown and when appropriate will be announced via an OVS note and letter to industry.

Action for OVSs

To note the contents of this OVS note.

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Imports and EU Trade Policy Team
