



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

## IMPORTS AND EU POLICY TEAM

OVS NOTE 2020/13

22 April 2020

### TEMPORARY CONTINGENCY OFFICIAL CONTROL MEASURES TO BE TAKEN AT BORDER CONTROL POSTS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

#### Purpose

To provide updated advice on the action that should be taken officials at Border Control Posts during the Covid-19 outbreak.

#### Background

[OVS note 2020/11](#) issued on 27 March provided guidance about certain special measures that can be adopted during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Following further risk assessments and for the purpose of clarity, that advice is being updated:

- Annex I – Remote checks
- Annex II – Scanned/electronic documentation

The exit strategy to revert to normal practice will be notified to BCPs.

#### Action for OVSs

To note the contents of this OVS note.

#### Contact point for enquiries

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*Imports and EU Trade Policy Team*



Animal &  
Plant Health  
Agency



## Performance of documentary, ID and physical checks – remote checks

1. BCPs may perform remote documentary and identity checks. Such checks may be carried out using available technology (e.g. video links via Facetime/Skype/CCTV etc). Identity checks can also be done remotely in real time using cameras or smartphones. Please note, the frequency of documentary and identity checks cannot be reduced and must continue to be 100% across all commodities.
2. Physical presence at BCPs can be reduced to the minimum by having one OVS present at the BCP to coordinate remote work. Please note, one OVS is required onsite as a minimum.
3. According to Article 49(2) of Regulation (EU) 2017/625, OVSs may perform physical checks remotely (via camera/smartphone) on animal products with assistance from non-OVS staff. As a temporary measure, non-OVS staff may perform these duties based on their knowledge and experience rather than formal training. The lead OVS must assess them as having suitable practical experience and knowledge and must deem them competent. As in accordance with Article 3 of Regulation [2020/466](#), such staff must be required to follow the instructions of the OVS for the performance of official controls and other official activities.
  - If the non-OVS staff is deemed competent by the lead OVS, they may perform physical checks independently of the OVS's direct supervision for POAOs other than fresh meat and edible meat offal, germinal products and animal by-products.
  - If the non-OVS staff is deemed competent by the lead OVS, they may assist with physical checks with OVS supervision for fresh meat and edible meat offal.
4. BCPs must keep Defra informed of the intended measures they will apply.



### **Scanned documents (please note no change in policy since OVS Note 2020/11, but updated for clarity)**

Border Control Posts (BCPs) designated for products of animal origin for human consumption (POAO) including fish and fishery products, animal by-products (ABP), and animal feed and high-risk food not of animal origin (HRFNAO) may accept scanned or electronic documents as a temporary contingency measure during the COVID-19 outbreak.<sup>1</sup>

This measure **excludes the following commodities** where original documents are still required:

- Germinal products
- porcine meat (including fresh/frozen meat, minced meat and meat preparations);
- fresh unprocessed animal by-products derived from porcine animals<sup>2</sup>

### **Background**

1. BCPs can 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. **OR**
  - For third countries using the TRACES 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.
2. The original paper certificates must be sent to the BCP as soon as technically feasible.
3. Commission Implementing Regulation (2020/466/EU) allows each EU Member State (the UK is applying EU legislation during the Transition Period) to decide whether to permit temporary solutions outlined in the Regulation to ensure less disruption to trade.

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<sup>1</sup> This policy also applies to BCPs designated for live fish.

<sup>2</sup> This policy also excludes live animals (other than live fish) and germinal products.

4. Defra and the FSA have agreed to accept scanned/e-documents for<sup>3</sup>:
  - POAOs (other than fresh/frozen meat, minced meat and meat preparations derived from porcine animals);
  - ABPs (other than unprocessed ABPs of porcine origin);
  - animal feed; and
  - HRFNAO.
5. Scanned signed TRACES CHED/CVED/CEDs or other accompanying documents can be accepted by BCPs only from importers (or their agents) that are subject to travel/staff/office restrictions and are unable to submit original documents to the BCP.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. For imports of germinal products, porcine meat (including fresh/frozen meat, minced meat and meat preparations) and unprocessed ABPs of porcine origin for which original documents are not able to be submitted to the BCP, the BCP may contact APHA who will request a Defra/FSA policy decision on a case by case basis.
9. This situation is being 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 may be added.
10. The end date of this temporary measure is unknown. Any changes to the policy will be announced via an OVS note to BCPs.

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<sup>3</sup> This policy also applies to live fish.

