



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 25/20

An update on the rollout of Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) into private veterinary businesses to carry out tuberculin skin testing of cattle in England

Date issued: 17 August 2020

Purpose

To inform Official Veterinarians (OVs) that from 2 November 2020, Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) will be rolled out into private veterinary businesses in England. From this date candidates will be able to register and enrol onto the Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional) – Approved Tuberculin Tester (OCQ(AHP) – ATT) training on the Improve International Limited AHP website. Veterinary businesses may recruit potential ATTs in advance of the rollout date but no training may commence prior to 2 November 2020.

To remind OVs of the minimum eligibility criteria for ATTs and notify them of the new instructions on the Vet Gateway detailing the full requirements for this role (see link below).

Background

On 18 March 2020 APHA issued Briefing Note 05/20 (link below) to inform OVs of the outcome of the pilot to explore the use of Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) in private veterinary businesses to carry out tuberculin skin testing of cattle in England.

OVs were informed that the Pilot had been successful and that rollout would commence from late 2020, subject to certain conditions being applied. In order to meet these conditions and ensure a smooth transition for all, APHA is implementing new processes and several updates prior to rollout on 2 November 2020.

Information

All veterinary businesses in England will have the opportunity to employ ATTs subject to meeting the requirements. ATTs will only be permitted to carry out testing in England and not in Wales or Scotland. They will be permitted to carry out all skin test types with the exception of tests required for export purposes (including for export of germplasm). **No test carried out by an ATT will be acceptable for export certification purposes.**

Certifying OVs and practices, particularly those who have keepers who may export, should take special note of this and advise their clients accordingly. Subcontracted or 'locum' ATTs will be permitted but all ATTs must work within a veterinary led team and meet the strict veterinary supervision requirements

The minimum eligibility criteria for an ATT are:

- Minimum age of 18 years.
- Completion of satisfactory identification and basic DBS security checks before enrolment on the training. Candidates will need to await the results of their DBS checks before commencing training and this needs to be considered when recruiting potential candidates.
- To hold either:
 - three GCSEs or equivalent qualifications in Mathematics, English and in a Science subject or Food Production or
 - three years performance in a Government regulatory role e.g. Local Authority (LA) Inspector or Environmental Health Officer
- A minimum of six months previous livestock handling experience.
- A Conflict of Interest declaration required at enrolment.
- The Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional) – Approved Tuberculin Tester (OCQ(AHP) - ATT) qualification must be gained before authorisation to carry out any TB testing.
- The theory training will be completed with an examination, which will need to be invigilated by a Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS), a Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN) or an online invigilator appointed by the training provider.
- Conditional authorisation to test under supervision for a maximum of six months will be granted following successful completion of the online course, examination and the confirmation of an Approved Veterinary Supervisor (AVS) and deputy/ies on the training record.
- An AVS must be nominated who must be an MRCVS with a current OCQ(V) – TT qualification. One AVS will be able to supervise a maximum of two ATTs, but only one of whom can be in training at any time. A deputy AVS must also be nominated with the option for a second. The AVS will also be able to act as a deputy for other ATTs.

- The AVS will be required to confirm an understanding of their role and responsibilities as detailed on the training record and declare their own position including a successful on farm TB audit (not including the OCQ(V)- TT practical assessment) within the last two years with no breaches. The AVS must accept responsibility and declare that they are supervising no more than the maximum permitted number of ATTs.
- Candidates will be required to test a minimum of 500 animals in at least ten herds under the direct and continuous supervision of an AVS. This must include some beef and some dairy type animals with no more than 100 animals in any one herd counting towards this total.
- Each candidate will be required to see a minimum of 80 skin reactions to the test and within that a certain number of different types of reaction - minimum 20 oedematous, 20 circumscribed. These can be observed on cattle that have been TB tested by another authorised officer, as long as the ATT has seen and recorded them or a combination of both. ATTs will be permitted to move to another practice under the supervision of another AVS if necessary to meet these requirements.
- Whilst training, candidates will need to be under constant direct supervision, i.e. physical presence of the AVS on farm whilst testing with no exceptions.
- Once the ATT is considered competent by the AVS and the minimum number of animals have been tested and reactions seen, the ATT will be eligible for the practical assessment and may enrol for a formal practical assessment.
- A practical assessment will be carried out by an independent assessor using the APHA contracted training provider. Candidates will need to be assessed both on the injection day and reading day of the test (TT1 and TT2). Testing of a minimum of 30 cattle must be assessed.
- If the assessment is passed, full authorisation to test will be issued from APHA. Candidates will not be permitted to test alone until authorisation is received.
- The AVS must complete an on-farm assessment of the testing of at least 20 animals at TT1 and TT2 between four and six months after the ATT's full authorisation is granted.
- A full on-farm audit must be carried out for all ATTs in the first twelve months following full authorisation by the VDP, APHA or the training provider.
- Following the initial on farm audit the ATT must have an APHA, VDP or training provider audit at least once every two years. The ATT will have to provide evidence that at least 30 cattle have been tested in every two year interval.
- APHA will continue to report on the performance of ATTs (and OV's) in terms of numbers of reactors, IRs and reactions identified against that expected. This will enable audits to be targeted to any outliers.
- Revalidation of the OCQ(AHP) – ATT (theory only) will be required:
 - Two years from the initial date of authorisation of the ATT

- Thereafter every four years

Although ATTs can conduct skin tests, responsibility for interpretation of their test results rests with their AVS or deputy (or in exceptional circumstances only by another OV holding the OCQ(V) – TT) who will sign off and submit the tests to APHA. The test submission deadlines are the same as those for OVs.

APHA will monitor all ATT tests submitted to ensure that the signatories are correct. ATTs are responsible for ensuring that the AVS and deputy details on their training record are correct at all times. Authorisation will be suspended or expired in the event that the AVS and deputy requirement is not fully met.

Veterinary businesses interested in using ATTs are strongly encouraged to read the full instructions on the Vet Gateway prior to recruiting potential candidates (link below).

Contacts

Briefing Note 05/20: <http://apha.defra.gov.uk/documents/ov/Briefing-Note-0520.pdf>

Link to Vet Gateway Instructions:

http://apha.defra.gov.uk/External_OV_Instructions/TB_Instructions/Updates/index.htm

[http://apha.defra.gov.uk/External_OV_Instructions/Approved Tuberculin Testers England/Updates/index.htm](http://apha.defra.gov.uk/External_OV_Instructions/Approved_Tuberculin_Testers_England/Updates/index.htm)

Further information including Q&A can be found on the TB hub website at:

<https://tbhub.co.uk/tb-policy/england/approved-tuberculin-testers-in-england/>

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