



Animal &  
Plant Health  
Agency

## **APHA Briefing Note 26/20**

# **Update on the outcome of the retender of the APHA contract for the Provision of Veterinary and Paraprofessional Training, Authorisation and Assurance Services.**

**Date issued: 18 August 2020**

### **Purpose**

To inform Official Veterinarians (OVs) and Animal Health Paraprofessionals (AHPs) that, following a procurement to retender the contract, Improve International Limited have been awarded the replacement contract for the Provision of Veterinary and Paraprofessional Training, Authorisation and Assurance Services. The new contract will commence on 2 November 2020.

To notify OVs and AHPs of the key changes to the services to be delivered under this contract when compared to the current contract.

### **Background**

Training and authorisation for OVs and AHPs is delivered via the contract currently held by Improve International Limited. Following the retender earlier this year, Improve International have been awarded the new contract, which will run for a minimum of five years.

A transition period is now in place, during which Improve International will work closely with APHA to ensure that all the new requirements are implemented and that the transition from one contract to the next is smooth, having minimal impact on OVs and AHPs. The transition period is due to end on the 2 November 2020, when the new contract will commence.

Any OVs already enrolled on a training course before 2 November will be able to complete the training without interruption.

There are several important changes to services being delivered under the contract, some of which have been introduced following the OCQ(V) review carried out by APHA at the end of 2018, during which feedback was sought from OV's on the training provision. The outcome of the review was published in the APHA Briefing Notes 05/19 and 08/19 (see links below).

There are several differences from the current contract and the major changes that will be noticed by OV's and AHP's are detailed below:

### New Courses

OCQ(V)		Target for Implementation
<b>FA/FAr</b>	<p>Farm Animal Exports (and revalidation)</p> <p>This course is in addition to the Ungulate and Equine courses so that farm animal vets have the option to exclude the equine component.</p> <p>Any OV already holding the OCQ(V) - UX will be permitted to choose to revalidate either OCQ(V) - UX or OCQ(V) - FA at revalidation in order to continue to carry out farm animal export work. They will then subsequently hold the authorisation for whichever one they choose to do. Those holding OCQ(V) - FA will not be able to choose to revalidate OCQ(V) - UX subsequently without completing the full OCQ(V) - UX.</p>	2 January 2021
<b>Laboratory and Zoo Vet Exports/r</b>	<p>Laboratory and Zoo Vet Exports (and revalidation)</p> <p>Proposed new course – under discussion with BVA specialist divisions.</p>	<p>If introduced:</p> <p>1 November 2021</p> <p>1 May 2025 (r)</p>

OCQ(AHP)		Target for Implementation
<b>CSOr</b>	Certification Support Officer revalidation	1 August 2022
<b>CO nv/r</b>	Certifying Officer non-veterinary (and revalidation)	TBC, anticipated 2021 for main course
<b>ATTr</b>	Approved Tuberculin Tester revalidation	2 November 2020 (Complete)

## **Prerequisites**

To reduce the number of qualifications that an OV must revalidate in order to maintain their authorisation, the requirement to separately revalidate the OCQ(V) - Essential Skills (ES) and the OCQ(V) - Exports General (EX) as prerequisites to other main qualifications has been removed. Instead, the ES and EX content will be incorporated into the other OCQ(V) revalidations for which they are required. The material could be 'skipped' by candidates if covered in another recently completed OCQ(V). However, the content will be assessed in the course examination. Both the OCQ(V) - ES and OCQ(V) - EX will be maintained as stand-alone courses for initial authorisation.

The OCQ(V) - Tuberculin Testing (TT) will no longer be a prerequisite for the OCQ(V) - Cymorth TB and whilst the OCQ(V) - Essential Skills (ES) will remain a prerequisite, there will be no requirement for OVs to revalidate ES in order to maintain the Cymorth qualification.

## **Conditional Authorisation**

The period of conditional authorisation for OVs completing the OCQ(V) - Tuberculin Testing (TT) will be reduced from six months to four months. However, extensions will be granted to OVs who cannot meet the requirements for the minimum number of animals or holdings tested by the new deadline, providing they have a successful on-farm assessment by their supervisor prior to the extension being granted. Much of the extension process will be automated.

## **On-farm TB Audit**

The new contract includes provision of on-farm one-day TB testing audits in England for OVs and ATTs who do not work under one of the Veterinary Delivery Partners (VDPs). These testers (identified by APHA) will be required to pay an audit fee of £550 + VAT per day to Improve International. There is also scope for Scotland and Wales to use the audit provision if required.

## **Peer Review for TB testing**

The majority of OVs will not need to use Peer Review, as it is only required in the event that the OV has not had an on-farm audit in the revalidation interval. APHA will ensure that high standards are maintained through monitoring Peer Reviewers' own testing performance and the Peer Reviews they have undertaken.

## **Fees**

In most cases, there will be little change to the current fees payable for the initial online theory training courses, with the majority costing £199 + VAT and a one-off registration remaining at £59 + VAT. There will be no change in the revalidation fees, which will remain

at £99 + VAT. However, for many OVs there will be a saving in each four-year revalidation cycle, as there will no longer be a requirement to revalidate the OCQ(V)s - ES and EX separately. The relevant material from these courses will instead be included in the main revalidation courses.

For the OCQ(V) - TT qualification, candidates enrolling from 2 November 2020 will pay separately for the theory and practical components, only being required to pay for the practical assessment when it is required. The fee for the theory course will be £199 + VAT and for the practical element the fee will be £450 + VAT (for the ATT course, the fee for the two-day ATT Practical Assessment will rise to £900 + VAT). This represents an increase in the combined cost to candidates of these two elements when compared to the current contract, necessary to ensure that the full cost of the practical assessment visit is covered.

Any OVs who have already enrolled for the TT theory training prior to 2 November 2020 will not need to pay additional fees for their practical assessment as the current payment structure will be honoured.

### **Remote Invigilation**

Remote invigilation for examinations will be provided as an option for candidates as an alternative to direct invigilation in person. Candidates will pay a fee of £49 + VAT for this option.

### **Examination**

In response to feedback from OVs, there will be more detailed feedback on completion of the examination at the end of each course. In addition to receiving a pass/fail notification, candidates will also be given a percentage mark and advised of the questions they answered incorrectly.

## **Further Information**

OV Briefing Notes:

<http://apha.defra.gov.uk/documents/ov/Briefing-Note-0519.pdf>;

<http://apha.defra.gov.uk/documents/ov/Briefing-Note-0819.pdf>

Improve International:

<https://www.improve-ov.com/home/>

<https://www.improve-ahp.com/home/>

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