



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 33/22

An update on the use of Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) in private veterinary businesses: approval to carry out tuberculin skin testing of cattle in Wales.

Date issued: 21 September 2022

Purpose

To inform Official Veterinarians (OVs) and Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) that from 1 October 2022, the use of ATTs in private veterinary businesses will be extended to permit them to carry out tuberculin skin testing of cattle in Wales, as well as in England.

To inform existing ATTs and their supervisors of the actions required should an ATT wish to have the option to TB test in Wales.

Background

Welsh Government have given permission for ATTs to carry out tuberculin skin testing of cattle in Wales.

ATT training and use will follow the successful pathway introduced in England.

From 1 October 2022, ATTs successfully completing the Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional) – Approved Tuberculin Tester (OCQ(AHP) – ATT) course, delivered by Improve International, will be permitted to work in both England and Wales. The course that they complete will include Wales-specific training which was previously not included.

Anyone completing the training prior to 1 October 2022 will only be authorised to work in England. New candidates wishing to work as ATTs in Wales should not commence the training before this date.

The authorisation for existing ATTs specifies that they can only work in England. In order for them to work in Wales their authorisation will need to be amended. See details below in 'Actions'.

Information

From 1 October 2022, all veterinary businesses in Wales will have the opportunity to employ ATTs subject to meeting the requirements. ATTs will be permitted to carry out testing in Wales and England but not in Scotland. ATTs are permitted to carry out all skin test types with the exception of tests required for export purposes (including for export of germplasm for example). **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, as in England, but all ATTs must work within a veterinary led team and meet the strict veterinary supervision requirements

A summary of the minimum eligibility criteria for ATTs is listed below.

The minimum eligibility criteria for registration for the ATT course 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.

The minimum criteria for conditional authorisation as an ATT are:

- Successful completion of the Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional) – Approved Tuberculin Tester (OCQ(AHP) - ATT) before authorisation to carry out any TB testing is granted. This will include:
 - completion of the online course, including a Conflict of Interest declaration
 - passing the online 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.

- Nomination of an Approved Veterinary Supervisor (AVS), who must:
 - be an MRCVS with a current OCQ(V) - TT qualification.
 - 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.

One AVS will be able to supervise a maximum of two ATTs, only one of whom can be in training at a 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.

- Completion and submission of a Sam declaration form

ATT candidates must not start work until they have received an email confirming their conditional authorisation.

Conditional authorisation allows ATT candidates to test under supervision for a maximum of six months.

In order to be given full authorisation to test under the direction of their AVS, an ATT with conditional authorisation must:

- 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. Whilst training, candidates will need to be under constant direct supervision i.e. physical presence of the AVS or their nominated deputy on farm whilst testing, with no exceptions.
- Observe a minimum of 80 skin reactions to the test (including a minimum of 20 oedematous reactions and 20 circumscribed reactions). These can be observed on cattle that have been TB tested by the ATT, another authorised officer (as long as the ATT has seen and recorded them), or a combination of both. If necessary, ATTs will be permitted to move to another practice under the supervision of another AVS in order to meet these requirements.
- Be signed off as competent by the AVS once the minimum number of animals have been tested and the minimum number of reactions have been seen.
- Pass a Practical Assessment, which 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.

Once the Practical Assessment is passed, full authorisation to test will be issued from APHA. This is usually within five working days of completing the Practical Assessment. **Candidates will not be permitted to test alone until the authorisation is received.**

The minimum criteria that must be met in order for an ATT to retain full authorisation to test under the direction of their AVS are:

- an on-farm assessment of the ATT's testing that is carried out by the AVS between four and six months after the ATT's full authorisation is granted. This must assess the testing of at least 20 animals at TT1 and TT2.
- Audits, including:
 - A full on-farm audit, which 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 monitor the performance of ATTs (and OVs) 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 (online course and examination only), which is 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). ATTs will have their own Sam access to enable them to record the test results but the AVS or deputy must sign off and submit the tests to APHA. The test submission deadlines are the same as those for OVs.

APHA monitor ATT test submissions 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.

Actions

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).

To note however that Wales-specific instructions, for example relating to test interpretation, will be available from 1 October 2022. However, the ATT training and authorisation requirements and the supervisor requirements for Wales will not differ from those in England and the current instructions are valid in this respect.

Existing ATTs

In order for existing ATTs to work in Wales, their current authorisation will need to be amended. ATTs will need to access the OCQ(AHP) - ATT training course that they most recently completed and work through the new Wales-specific information. This will be available from 1 October 2022 and will be highlighted throughout the course. The course can be accessed through the ATT's Improve International personal training dashboard; no payment will be required in order to access the course.

Once the ATT has completed the new training material, they will need to notify the APHA OV team in writing using the email address below and include a written declaration from their Approved Veterinary Supervisor (AVS) or deputy AVS confirming that they have reviewed the new Wales-specific information. Once this confirmation is received, the authorisation will be amended to permit the ATT to work in both England and Wales.

Please note that an ATT must not carry out any TB testing in Wales, including on farms that cross the border into Wales, until they have received a new letter of authorisation from APHA.

If no action is taken, existing ATTs will still be permitted to test in England. However, when they next successfully complete the OCQ(AHP) - ATT revalidation course, their authorisation will be updated to also include Wales. ATTs will need to notify the APHA OV Team once they have completed the revalidation training, who will then issue the new authorisation letter.

Contacts

- [Vet Gateway Instructions](#)

- For queries on the use of ATTs in Wales:

APHA – Tel: 0300 303 8268

Email - APHA.CymruWales@APHA.gov.uk

- For further information regarding the training, including registration, enrolment and technical support:

Email: enquiries@improve-ahp.com

Improve International – Tel : 0330 202 0380

- For queries relating to training and authorisation:

APHA OV team – Email: CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk