



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 35/20

End of Transition Period: updates on Export Health Certificates and new guidance published on certification of goods to EU

Date issued: 30 October 2020

Purpose

1. This note asks Official Veterinarians (OVs) **to complete [a short survey](#) on their certification work**. It also provides Official Veterinarians with information on:
 - a. The use of Export Health Certificates (EHCs) for EU trade and movements to Northern Ireland following the end of the Transition Period
 - b. Registering for EHC Online and the use of the digital service for managing EHC caseload
 - c. The launch of the Groupage Export Facilitation Scheme (GEFS)
 - d. The publication of guidance on Certification of Products of Animal Origin Away From The Premises of Origin.

Overview

2. From January 2021, live animals, products of animal origin (POAO) and Animal By Products (ABP) exported from GB to the EU will be subject to EU import controls in the same way as other non-EU sovereign states. Under the Northern Ireland Protocol movements of these products from GB to Northern Ireland will be subject to the same SPS standards as those exported to the EU.
3. Exporters will require an EHC for EU trade as well as for movements of certain products to Northern Ireland. EHCs are evidence that a consignment meets EU import health requirements. Businesses will be unable to trade with the EU without them. EHCs used to move POAO to NI will use the same content as an EU EHC.
4. Exporters will need to use EHC Online when exporting their goods to the EU or moving them to NI from 1 January 2020. EHC Online is the digital service that export businesses and OVs will use to apply for, print and manage their EHCs. Certifying

officers will need to be registered with EHC Online in order to certify goods and issue exporters with an EHC.

5. Defra has developed a range of guidance to support Official Veterinarians to undertake export health certification. These documents are explained in this note and should be read in conjunction with the relevant Export Health Certificates and Notes for Guidance. You can view specimen EU EHCs and read the Notes for Guidance on Defra's [Form Finder](#).
6. Prior to the introduction of certification for Export Health Certification for EU trade, Defra wants to develop a full picture of the time spent by OVs on certification and how this may change following the end of the Transition Period. We have developed a short survey which can be found [here](#). It will take you no more than five minutes to complete and will be open until **Monday 9th November**. We would be grateful if you would take the time to complete it.

Registering for EHC online

7. To apply for an EHC export businesses need to register for an EHC Online account and use the service to apply for and manage their applications. Certifying officers will also use EHC Online to receive EHC applications from their clients, manage their EHC caseload, print EHCs for certification after inspection of the goods, and notify APHA of the outcome.
8. EU EHC applications, in most cases, will be routed automatically straight from the export business to the certifier via EHC Online to enable a quick turnaround. For a small number of EHCs APHA will undertake a disease clearance check on the application before it is sent to the Certifying Officer via EHC Online.
9. Your veterinary practice or organisation may already be registered for EHC Online to handle 'third country' EHCs today. If so, you do not need to register again to deal with EU trade; your existing account will be used to manage both third country and EU EHCs in one place. If your veterinary practice or organisation is not already registered, they should do so now to ensure you can receive EHC applications from your clients.
10. Before registering please check that you are not already registered to avoid creating duplicate accounts. If you are unsure if you are already registered or are unsure who your account's administrator is please contact APHA on 03000 200 301. **To register use the [Certifier start page on gov.uk](#)**. For more information on how to manage your account please consult [APHA's Vet Gateway](#).
11. Although EHCs are not required for EU trade or NI movements until 1 January 2021, export business can apply for them now in advance of 1 January 2021 to help them prepare. You could now start to receive EU EHC applications in your EHC Online account dashboard (the place you view EHCs requiring action).

12. These certificates do not need to travel with goods into the EU or NI until 1 January 2021 and cannot be certified until the UK becomes listed as a Third Country (non-EU-country). We expect this listing to occur in the lead up to the 1 January 2021 and further communications will be issued once this is confirmed informing Certifying Officials of when they can begin to certify EU EHCs in line with the relevant rules for each animal/product type
13. **Until confirmation of Third Country listing is received and further communications are issued you should NOT certify any EU EHCs that appear from your export clients in your EHC Online dashboard. A further note will be issued once certification of EU EHCs can begin.**

Groupage Export Facilitation Scheme

14. Defra has published guidance on the Groupage Export Facilitation Scheme (GEFS) on the [Vet Gateway](#). Exporters can now apply for the scheme and should be contacting their OV to discuss requirements.
15. GEFS is a membership scheme for exporters of certain products of animal origin from stable supply chains, packaged for sale to the final consumer. The scheme allows exporters to use 30-day time limited support attestations. These are agreed between the certifying OV, the exporter, the suppliers of the relevant exporter and vets (or Certification Support Officers (CSOs)) performing supplier inspections to facilitate the certification of groupage consignments at the premises of dispatch.
16. A GEFS support attestation can be used, in combination with others forms of information as permitted by Article 88 of the Official Controls Regulation (Regulation EU 2017/625) by a OV when completing EHCs for EU and NI Trade for relevant products undertaken by scheme members.
17. The agreement of a GEFS support attestation requires inspections of the supplier premises by a vet (or CSO working under the direction of a certifying OV), which must take into account traceability information and manufacturing processes relevant to the products being supplied throughout the supply chain and not just the immediate supplier premises. The GEFS attestation consists of a declaration by a suitable representative of the supplier which must be verified by the inspecting vet. The level of evidence required for vets to verify details in the supplier declaration should be agreed in advance with the certifying OV to ensure this is sufficient to certify the EU requirements of the relevant EHC. Clear evidence of the stability of the supply chain must also be provided. Repeat supplier inspections are needed for new GEFS attestations to be issued.
18. The guidance provides a template GEFS support attestation which must be used, although the specific content of each GEFS support attestation will depend on the product being exported and the supplier.

19. OVs authorised to certify products of animal origin should familiarise themselves with the GEFS guidance and procedures in preparation for exporters wanting to use the service of OVs for GEFS. If you have any questions about the scheme please email GEFS@defra.gov.uk.

Certification of Products of Animal Origin Away From the Premises of Origin

20. Guidance is also available for Certifying Officers, including Official Veterinarians, when certifying products of animal origin away from the premises of origin. This guidance is available on the [Vet Gateway](#).

21. It includes detail on the different forms of supporting information which certifying officers may rely upon when completing an EHC and aims to encourage the use of consolidation facilities such as food approved cold stores (approved under Regulation EC 853/2004) known as logistics hubs.

22. This guidance references the GEFS guidance and the GEFS Support Attestation, but also provides detail on the supporting information that a certifying OV is able to accept on a batch by batch basis. This may be relevant where a product being exported is not in scope of GEFS or the exporter is not eligible for GEFS membership. For example, where different products from different exporters are brought together for certification in a single load at an approved premises.

23. This includes in certain circumstances where a certifying OV can accept the attestation of an APHA/DAERA authorised Food Competent Certifying Officer (FCCO) as permitted by the RCVS Principles of Certification.

24. The guidance also references the use of Risk Based Fish Export Certification (RBFEC) and supporting information provided on this basis. Although certain OVs are able to certify fishery products, they are not able to issue supporting attestations under the RBFEC approach.

25. OVs should familiarise themselves with the detail of the guidance in preparation for discussions with exporters.

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