

OFFICIAL VETERINARIAN

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Tenders invited for TB testing and other veterinary services

AHVLA has issued an Invitation-to-Tender for suppliers (to be known as Delivery Partners) to provide a flexible package of taxpayer funded veterinary services in seven geographical lots covering England and Wales.

In July 2013 AHVLA [announced plans](#) to modernise its relationship with suppliers of veterinary services in order to ensure they were delivered in a way which is demonstrably more effective and efficient in meeting the needs of government, the farmed livestock industry, the veterinary profession and other stakeholders.

The new contractually-based model will better assure the quality of tuberculin testing and other veterinary services, enhancing their value as disease control tools, whilst, importantly, continuing to recognise and support the partnership that exists between livestock farmers and their vets in controlling and eradicating animal disease.

In developing this tender AHVLA has sought, and acted on, feedback from the veterinary profession and livestock industry. This is recognised in some of the key elements of the procurement:

- As accurate tuberculin testing is a foundation for controlling bovine TB the tender will focus on the quality of service to be delivered, whilst ensuring best overall value-for-money for the taxpayer.

- AHVLA recognises the importance of a strong working relationship between livestock keepers and their vet. For this reason, Delivery Partners will be required to sub-contract work to local businesses, provided these businesses are able to work to the required quality assurance standards and offer a competitive price. Delivery Partners will also be required to allow animal keepers to select their preferred vet

from these sub-contractors; this preference will be respected whenever possible.

- The standards of service livestock keepers can expect will be clearer than they are now. The Delivery Partner will be obliged to work with keepers to make sure that a suitable vet is available when required, and both Delivery Partners and AHVLA will monitor customer satisfaction.

- Delivery Partners will have to implement a rigorous quality assurance system, in particular to ensure that TB testing is done to the required standard. They will also have to adhere to a health and safety policy which includes cattle handling.

It is anticipated that contracts will be awarded towards the end of 2014, with suppliers beginning to deliver services from April 2015. Contracts will initially be awarded for a three year period, with the option to extend the arrangement for a further two years. The existing way of working will continue until the new arrangements begin.

More detail is available in the form of a Q&A published on the AHVLA website at: <http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/official-vets/changes-to-procurments/index.htm>



New OV qualification and training provider announced

AHVLA has announced that it has awarded a contract for the training and revalidation of OVs in England, Scotland and Wales to Improve International, an established provider of veterinary training.

Improve International won the contract and is now beginning the launch of a new OV qualification, the 'Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary)' - or OCQ (V), which will be delivered via blended learning methods in conjunction with Improve International's assessment partner, The European School of Veterinary Postgraduate Studies (ESVPS), and Harper Adams University, which will validate the qualification.

Existing OVs will be granted 'grandfather' rights meaning that experienced OVs will not need to undertake initial training, but to qualify they must register onto the new system before 31 March 2015. Revalidation at intervals of two to five years is being introduced for all OVs to ensure that quality standards are maintained.

Under the new system, individuals or employers will fund their own OV training at a cost of between £99 and £249 plus VAT per training or revalidation module. This cost however will be offset by the benefits offered by the new approach, which include:

- More accessible training routes, with vets able to access the majority of course content at all times, and without having to be absent from the practice whilst attending training courses.
- Training will also count towards the mandatory CPD (continuing professional development) requirement for vets.

Implementing the new approach

As of 1 August 2014, AHVLA's OV Panels will begin to be replaced by the new OCQ (V)s.

To exercise their 'grandfather rights' existing OVs must register with Improve

International between August 2014, and 31 March 2015. The new registration database is up and running and can be accessed at <http://www.improve-ov.com/>.

Current OVs will then be invited to transfer their existing OV Panels to the equivalent OCQ (V), noting that some existing OV panels will be grouped into a single qualification to reduce the overall number of OCQ (V)s. A list of the new OCQ (V)s is shown below and OVs will be able to transfer to OCQ (V)s all OV Panels shown on their current CW10.

When registering it is necessary for OVs to declare that their knowledge of OV instructions has been kept up to date and that they are familiar with the relevant provisions of the RCVS code of conduct.

The deadline for completing registration and the activation of 'grandfather rights' is 31 March 2015. All the historic OV panels will be rescinded from that date and OVs who fail to exercise their 'grandfather rights' by then will be required to complete the initial OCQ (V) training modules and to seek re-authorisation in order to continue to operate as an OV.

A one-time registration fee of £59 (plus VAT) will apply at the time of registration; however there will be a discount - £39 plus VAT - for existing OVs registering before 9 January 2015. This registration fee is separate to fees for OCQ (V) training or revalidation modules.

The first three OV training courses are also now available. These cover the following OCQ (V)s:

- OCQ (V) - TT (Tuberculin testing)
- OCQ (V) - ES (Essential Skills)
- OCQ (V) - CA (Companion animals)

The detail and cost of each OCQ (V) will be announced as each module is finalised and introduced, but the cost of individual modules will not exceed a maximum of £249 for the duration of Improve International's three-year contract.

OCQ (V) / OV Panel Equivalents

OCQ(V)	Equivalent OV Panel	Revalidation Period
ES - Essential Skills	AHVLA General training and Panel 1d Notifiable Disease & Panel 10	5 years
TT - Tuberculin Testing	Panels 1a & 6b	2 years
EX - Exports General	Exports Certification and Procedures Module & part Panel 1m	5 years
SX - Exports Small Animals	Panel 2 Exports of companion animals including PETS and pet birds and Part Panel 1h (Commercial export of Small Animals & Export of Small Zoo Animals) and Part Panel 1i (Export of Laboratory Animals)	5 years
SS - Statutory Surveillance	Panels 1b,1c & 1o	3 years
UX - Ungulate Exports	Panel 1g Export/Import of Equines Panel 1j Export of Farm Animals - Breeding Panel 1p Export of Farm Animals - Production and Slaughter Part Panels 1h & 1i: Export of Large Zoo Animals, Export of Large Laboratory Animals.	3 years
AX - Avian Exports	Panel 1k Export of Birds, Poultry and Hatching Eggs	3 years
PX - Product Exports	Panel 1l Export of Animal Products Panel 3 Export of Red Meat Panel 4 Export of White Meat Panel 5 Export of Red/White Meat Products Part Panel 1m Export of Fish Products	3 years
GX - Germplasm Exports	Panel 1n Export of Semen and Embryos	3 years
CA - Companion Animals	Panel 2 Export of Companion Animals and PETS including pet birds	5 years

Revalidation

Revalidation will normally require that a short online module be undertaken. In the case of OCQ (V) - TT, part of revalidation will be an audit of an OV's practical performance with satisfactory results. This is likely to be undertaken by a partner or senior member of a veterinary business.

The revalidation period for OV exercising their 'grandfather rights' begins on 1 April 2015, meaning that an OV must, in the case of an OCQ (V) with a five year revalidation period, revalidate their qualification before 31 March 2020 in order to retain it.

Further information on the introduction of OCV (Q) and training is available on the AHVLA website at:

<http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/official-vets/training-and-authorisation/index.htm>.



Tenders invited to supply other veterinary services to government

AHVLA has invited tenders for a new framework to supply a diverse range of veterinary services to any UK government organisation, including AHVLA. This is a separate tender to the managed service contract for veterinary services (described above), which includes tuberculin testing by OV's.

This framework aims to capture the complete range of veterinary services which may be needed on top of permanent in-house government resources during major incidents, such as serious exotic disease outbreaks, other peaks in workload, or specific demands for a particular service. The creation of a framework of suppliers will enable government organisations to access these services when they need to from suppliers that have already been assessed and can meet the requirements.

The framework, which will cover the whole of the UK consists of the following lots:

Lot 1 - Veterinary personnel

The provider will be required to supply vets to cover staff shortages, peaks of work or to undertake specific activities which are not suitable for outsourcing. In some instances these vets will be appointed as a Veterinary Inspector under the Animal Health Act 1981 to carry out statutory functions.

Lot 2 - Animal health and animal care technicians and support staff

Technicians and support staff are a critical part of AHVLA's workforce and are particularly important during disease outbreaks, when they can undertake sampling, implement biosecurity measures, oversee contractors, collect data and handle animals.

The provider will be required to supply technicians, scientists, support or administrative staff who have animal health, animal handling or veterinary science skills for a range of animal species.

Lot 3 - Drop-in facilities

AHVLA, and others, need to maintain a responsive service across the whole of England, Scotland and Wales which requires some fixed locations across these areas.

The cost of providing numerous government buildings to sustain this is becoming unaffordable, but it is inefficient for field staff to travel excessive distances.

Following a recent successful pilot, AHVLA is seeking to commission 'drop-in' centre amenities from veterinary practices and other businesses with suitable facilities. The facilities might be used as part of normal day-to-day business or for shorter periods.

Lot 4 - Surveillance and diagnostic services

Providers are required to supply resources that supplement and enhance the government's capability to investigate incidents that significantly adversely impact animal health or welfare or public health. This might include activities such as: the collection and analysis of data or samples; planning and organisation of active surveillance; testing samples; carrying out clinical and pathological examinations; the capability to carry out quality-assured laboratory testing; post-mortem facilities and carcase disposal; and, in exceptional circumstances, tuberculin testing and other OV services.

Lot 5 - Vaccination

Providers are sought who can provide a team of vets, and technicians to act as lay vaccinators and animal handlers, to administer vaccine, sometimes at short notice across a range of species.

Lot 6 - Stand-by veterinary services for animal / public health or welfare incidents

There is a trend for veterinary businesses to contract with specialist suppliers to undertake out of normal business hours work. Government has similar requirements for a provision of a rapid emergency or out-

of-hours response to carry out an initial investigation of animal health, public health or animal welfare incidents. Suppliers are sought to provide a stand-by service which will ensure a suitable skilled vet arrives at an incident, within geographically defined areas, within two hours of being called at any time of the day or night, to carry out an investigation to a specified protocol and immediately report the results by telephone to AHVLA.

Lot 7 - Training and education

Changes in animal health and welfare policy need effective communication and, at times, liaison throughout the livestock sector in order to be implemented effectively. This may require that animal keepers, and their vets, are appropriately informed or trained. This requirement may arise due to routine legislative changes or an emerging disease situation.

The target audience could range from animal keepers (farmers and recreational pets such as horses) to veterinary surgeons and other interested parties such as animal transporters, exporters, markets, abattoirs, fallen stock collectors and the germplasm sector.

Providers are sought that can deliver this requirement, ranging from the provision of on-line training to delivery through a series of training or stakeholder events.

Lot 8 - Advisory services

There are many aspects of state veterinary medicine for which the expertise is held within government. There are occasions when this may be supplemented by bringing in additional expertise for policy development or emergency response.

Providers are sought who can supply a range of skills so they are able to deliver complete packages of work in addition to ad-hoc advice.

Lot 9 - Veterinary research

AHVLA undertakes a large programme of applied veterinary research and surveillance work across a range of veterinary pathogens of statutory and public health interest. As workloads dictate, it may be necessary to supplement existing resources with specialist skills to work on particular projects or work areas for variable periods of time, or to commission packages of work from institutions with suitable expertise.

Providers are sought who can supply expertise in, but not limited to: epidemiology, risk assessment, mathematical modelling, bioinformatics, data handling, social sciences including, economics, sociology and psychology, specialist health and safety support. They are also sought in laboratory and field sciences including: bacteriology, virology, pathology, parasitology, and animal sciences.

It is planned that contracts will commence in October 2014.



New PME providers announced

Additional providers of subsidised post-mortem examinations will be available to support veterinary businesses in their diagnostic work from 1 September. They will also form part of a wider scanning surveillance network which includes AHVLA, private veterinary and the livestock industry.

As part of AHVLA's new approach to improving access to diagnostic support for private veterinary businesses and enhance scanning surveillance, AHVLA-operated Veterinary Investigation Centres are being supplemented by:

- The Royal Veterinary College - serving areas of East England
- SAC Consulting Veterinary Services - serving areas in North East England
- The University of Bristol - serving areas of South West England
- The University of Surrey - serving the East Midlands and South East and parts of South West, East and North West England (from autumn - winter 2014/15)

By adding additional post-mortem examination (PME) providers to AHVLA's network of post-mortem centres, and through the introduction of a funded carcass collection and transport service to serve areas more than one hour from a PME centre, AHVLA is increasing the proportion of livestock holdings with good access to diagnostic and surveillance sites.

Accessing diagnostic support

The Royal Veterinary College, SAC Consulting Veterinary Services and the University of Bristol will begin providing expert PME investigations on 1 September 2014.

The University of Surrey, in some areas utilising local facilities, will provide expert PME services in the East Midlands and South East England and parts of the South West, East and North West of England from autumn - winter 2014/15.

Veterinary businesses can access diagnostic support initially by contacting their nearest PME facility:

PME Facilities as of 1st September

Area served	PME facility	Contact
South West England ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHVLA Starcross ▪ University of Bristol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 01626 891121 ▪ 0117 928 9402
East England ²	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHVLA Bury St Edmunds ▪ Royal Veterinary College 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 01284 724499 ▪ 01707 666630
East Midlands ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHVLA Sutton Bonington⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 01509 672332
West Midlands ³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHVLA Shrewsbury ▪ AHVLA Sutton Bonington⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 01743 467621 ▪ 01509 672332
North West England ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHVLA Penrith 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 01768 885295
North East England	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SAC Consulting Veterinary Services ▪ AHVLA Thirsk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 01835 822456 ▪ 01845 522065
Yorkshire & Humberside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHVLA Thirsk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 01845 522065
Wales ³	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ AHVLA Carmarthen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 01267 235244

¹ University of Surrey will serve the South East of England and East Midlands, and parts of the South West, and North West of England from autumn-winter 2014/15.

² In addition, the University of Surrey will also serve some parts of the East of England from autumn - winter 2014/15.

³ Tenders to identify additional PME providers in these areas will be re-published shortly.

⁴ AHVLA will no longer undertake PMEs at Sutton Bonington from autumn / winter 2014.

A postcode-based 'site-finder' will soon be available online.

Dates for the commencement of the University of Surrey's PME service have yet to be contractually agreed, but details will be published as soon as they are available. In the meantime, please continue to access AHVLA's PME services as now.

The University of Liverpool has ceased providing a PME service as of 31 August 2014. A carcass collection service, funded for three years, has been introduced to serve the North West of England. This is to bridge the gap until the University of Surrey's PME service becomes operational in the North West of England during winter 2014/15.

Please do not submit carcasses to any PME facility without first agreeing this with the receiving site. A disposal fee may be charged for any carcasses received without prior agreement.

Postal submissions should continue to be sent to AHVLA laboratories as now (see attached information leaflet).

Carcass collection and transport

In the majority of areas more than one hour from a PME facility, AHVLA is introducing a carcass collection and transport service. This service is fully funded for up-to three years, pending the development of other PME provision locally.

To access this service please contact your nearest AHVLA Veterinary Investigation Centre.

In addition, non-AHVLA PME providers may also be providing a chargeable carcass transport service in the areas they serve.

Pending the commencement of the University of Surrey's PME service, the carcass transport arrangements in the areas previously served by AHVLA PME centres at Polwhele (Truro), Winchester and Preston are in place.

The carcass transport service in the areas previously served by the AHVLA Luddington and Aberystwyth are also continuing pending the identification of an additional PME provider or longer term transport arrangements (see below). As the Aberystwyth site will close on 31 August 2014, carcasses should, from this date, be delivered to a collection centre at Lampeter (or can be collected on farm depending on the farm's location) after discussion with the duty Veterinary Investigation Officer at AHVLA Carmarthen. AHVLA and the Welsh Government are continuing to seek solutions for the AHVLA site at Aberystwyth, at which point the carcass collection service may transfer back to the site. Further communications on this will be issued as soon as possible.

Improving diagnostic expertise and threat intelligence

A dedicated Surveillance Intelligence Unit (SIU) has been created within AHVLA. This incorporates the Leads of the Species Expert Groups, information and expertise sharing networks with membership from across AHVLA, industry and academia.

The SIU is tasked with:

- The collation and analysis of epidemiological, pathological and diagnostic testing results (from AHVLA and partner providers), combining this with knowledge of the livestock population and industry practices.

- Exploring other / new sources of data and intelligence to add value to the analyses to provide horizon scanning and reassurance of early warning of new and emerging threats.
- Publishing surveillance reports that can be used to support evidence based decision making at all levels - farmer, vet and Government.

If you wish to discuss an issue with a species expert, please contact any AHVLA Veterinary Investigation Centre.

Key surveillance findings are regularly published in the *Veterinary Record* and more detailed species reports are published on the AHVLA website. In October 2014 a dedicated website will be launched to serve as a single portal for all information published by AHVLA aimed at private vets. This will improve accessibility to content, such as surveillance reports, Official Veterinarian instructions and access to AHVLA's online systems, such as Sam, and the future online sample submission system described below.

Next steps

Additional PME providers

Additional PME providers to serve parts of Wales and the West Midlands will be sought through a competitive procurement exercise. A 'Supplier Day' aimed at prospective bidders is being held at the Royal Welsh Show Ground, Builth Wells on 16 September 2014. Following this, invitations-to-tender will be published on Defra's e-procurement system, Bravo, at: <https://defra.bravosolution.co.uk/web/login.shtml>.

Improving the processing of postal submissions

A new IT system will allow you to book-in postal samples online, including test selection. This will speed up processing, allow you to monitor progress and access diagnostic reports as soon as they become available. The system will be available from early spring 2015.

New training in diagnostic pathology

AHVLA is also looking at ways to improve pathology training for private vets. This would enable more, or improve the quality of, first opinion PME's undertaken at fallen stock centres or elsewhere, speeding up the diagnosis of more common issues as well as potentially providing surveillance data.

A recent survey of private vets confirmed demand for such training and AHVLA is now working with potential training providers to explore how such training can best be developed. Further announcements are likely in early 2015.

Working in partnership with you

AHVLA continues to operate a subsidised, UKAS quality-assured diagnostic and surveillance service to the veterinary profession and your clients. Through including other pathology providers within the system, and also through the provision of a funded carcass transport service, accessibility to this service has increased in many areas, even if AHVLA has itself ceased PME's locally.

By engaging with AHVLA, veterinary businesses not only gain access to expert pathology advice but, through the data collected and analysed, to surveillance intelligence. This can better equip you to recognise and understand what is happening on your client's farms, improving the advice you are able to provide.

AHVLA remains very much 'open-for-business' and offers a highly capable expert service for your business. Only by working together can we create an effective surveillance network for England and Wales, and we urge you to make use of the considerable expertise that exists with AHVLA and its suppliers for the benefit of all.



AHVLA to become part of merged agency

AHVLA is to merge with parts of the Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA) to create a single agency from 1 October 2014 called the Animal and Plant Health Agency.

The merger will bring together Defra's plant health inspectors and animal health services. Alongside all AHVLA's current responsibilities, the organisation will also be responsible for inspectorate work in the field of plant and seed health, honey bee health, genetically modified crops and the regulatory oversight of the introduction of new plant and seed varieties in England and Wales.

A merged agency will be better placed to exploit opportunities for synergies and efficiencies, increasing resilience, enhancing flexibility and strengthening the emergency-response capability. Both parts of the new organisation have considerable experience in dealing with widespread disease outbreaks and pooling this experience and resource will allow best practice and greater resilience for the future.

AHVLA's current Chief Executive Chris Hadkiss has been named as the Chief Executive of the merged agency.



Putting health and safety first

OVs have recently reported some issues regarding TB testing facilities and that a notable minority of farmers have outdated views as to what testing facilities are acceptable for herd testing.

Whilst OV businesses should perform their own risk assessments and work to their own health and safety practices, when a test is arranged, OVs, practice principals, or receptionists are advised to remind clients that they must have facilities that do not pose a hazard to the tester. This is particularly important for herds that are not seen on a routine basis.

If keepers have unsuitable handling facilities then the test should not take place until the cattle can be presented in appropriate facilities, even if your client is in danger of having herd movement restrictions imposed because of an overdue test. It is worthwhile noting that there is a legal obligation to present animals for testing and single farm payment claimants with very overdue tests may end up with subsidy reductions under cross compliance rules.

Health and safety is a top priority for AHVLA, and we would ask OVs to assess the risks involved in TB testing before starting the process and to decline to test if not satisfied that it can be done safely.



Cattle Health & Welfare Group: second annual report

The Cattle Health and Welfare Group (CHAWG) have published its second report on cattle health and welfare in Great Britain, and can be accessed at: <http://www.eblex.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/CHAWG-Annual-%20Report-2014.pdf>

Members of CHAWG include AHVLA, the Animal Health & Welfare Board of England, Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Government.

This second report (published in July 2014) examines the state of Great Britain's cattle health and welfare and highlights the need to prioritise health and welfare issues, set defined targets and collaborate across the nations in achieving measurable results.



Legal Position on 'Cow Pacifiers' Electro Immobilisation

In February 2013, following concerns raised by AHVLA and Local Authority officials, Defra clarified the legal position on the use of electrical cattle immobilisers in the Veterinary Record journal.

Electrical cattle immobilisers are prohibited by the Welfare of Farmed Animals (England) Regulations 2007, which states that:

‘An electrical current must not be applied to an animal for the purpose of immobilisation’. Equivalent legislation for Wales and Scotland also prohibits the use of electro immobilisation.

Anyone found to have used electro immobilisation as a method of restraining animals’ risks enforcement action, including prosecution. In England, the maximum penalty for offences under the Welfare of Farmed Animals Regulations is six months imprisonment and / or a fine of up to £2,500. There is also a possibility of penalties being applied to their direct agricultural support payments (including Single Farm Payments).

Enhanced management of persistent TB herds

Since February 2014, herd breakdowns lasting more than 18 months are being considered for enhanced case management procedures aimed at helping owners of such herds regain their Officially TB Free (OTF) status as quickly as possible. Measures may include additional investigative work to identify factors contributing to persistence of infection followed by targeted interventions to address the issues identified.

This forms part of AHVLA’s more rigorous approach to business as usual activity, and towards the case management of herds suffering long-term bTB breakdowns in England and Wales. OVs will be consulted for local knowledge and herd health issues that may be of significance, and may also be invited to attend an on-farm meeting, for which they will be paid.

De-restricting parts of TB-restricted premises in England and Wales

From the end of September 2014, AHVLA will no longer allow the partial de-restriction of TB-breakdown herds in England and Wales. Additionally, DEFRA and the Welsh Government has not allowed partial de-restrictions since June and May 2014 respectively, as these premises are likely to still be under restriction in September 2014.

Movement restrictions will apply to all cattle on the premises (CPH) for the duration of the breakdown, until all animals have achieved OTF status and the restrictions are lifted on the entire holding. TB Isolation Units, where cattle from a TB-restricted herd can be tested to achieve OTF status and then move onto another holding, will continue to be allowed if they are registered on a separate holding.

Changes to TB cattle movement controls in England

Defra has announced mandatory pre-movement testing for cattle moving to and from common land in England from 30 June 2014.

Owners of cattle grazing common land may produce a TB Control Plan for that Common, together with all the co-graziers and submit it to AHVLA for approval. This will allow AHVLA to consider issuing a licence to exempt the cattle from the requirement for a PrMT for the movement off, but not onto the common grazing. The exemption can require post movement testing, or may allow the movement to take place without the need for any additional testing.

More detail can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-information-note-changes-to-tb-cattle-movement-controls>

Badger vaccination fund (England) 2014

Defra's bovine TB Strategy for England, published in April 2014, included an undertaking to consider financial support for privately-led strategic projects, for example those focussed on maximising the immunity of badgers in locations at greatest risk of advancing infection. As a result, a new badger Edge Vaccination Scheme will be launched later this year and is intended to support larger scale vaccination and provide longer term financial and other support, such as training and advice, in the Edge Area of England, where the disease is spreading from the High Risk Area.

To give groups time to prepare for support under the new scheme, Defra are opening the existing Badger Vaccination Fund for a further year, focused on the Edge Area of England and with a reduced set of eligibility criteria.

Under the Badger Vaccination Fund, eligible schemes must involve two or more adjacent cattle farms in the Edge Area comprising the counties of Hampshire, East Sussex, Berkshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire. Defra will also take into account the applicant's progress on securing a Natural England vaccination licence, the cost of the scheme per km² and measures taken to secure best value for money in their vaccination scheme.

More information can be found on GOV.UK at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-information-note-badger-vaccination-fund-2014>.

Bovine electronic identification

Many OV's have expressed an interest in developments around bovine electronic identification (EID), which has the potential to aid TB skin tests through automated identification as cattle pass through the crush.

The European Commission has published a proposal for changes to Regulations for bovine identification and registration to allow for Bovine EID. The proposal still faces hurdles before amended regulations would come into force and is subject to co-decision procedures in Europe. If the proposal is adopted amended regulations are likely. Technical standards for electronic identification would then be drawn-up by the European Commission.

In addition, significant database changes and other IT provisions will need to be put in place. It is likely that Bovine EID will need to be implemented by Member States within five years. It remains to be determined to what extent bovine EID will be compulsory or voluntary and whether it will only apply to new-born calves or also to cattle with existing identification. Technical standards for EID devices have also yet to be determined.

The proposal would provide for cattle keepers to avoid the need to keep herd registers in some circumstances. It is anticipated that cattle keepers who electronically report births, deaths and movements would fulfil the requirement of keeping a herd register through enhanced functionality within the national database.

Ending of pre-movement testing exemptions in Wales

The Welsh Government has announced that the pre-movement testing (PrMT) exemption for Single Occupational Authorities (SOAs) is being removed from the end of September 2014. The ongoing CPH review will reorganise how all holdings in Wales are managed by 2017. Until then a set of arrangements (the Interim Land Association Management (ILAM) agreement) has been put in place to help manage cattle movements between parcels of land that formerly fell within the SOA exemption.

An ILAM will allow herd keepers who previously had a SOA to apply to AHVLA for an agreement to allow them to move their animals without a PrMT test as long as the movements are to and from land within 10

miles of the main holding. There will be a number of other criteria that must be met before AHVLA grant an ILAM including an adequate level of biosecurity.

Eligible keepers will contact their Official Veterinarian in the first instance to arrange for the application form and declarations to be completed - there will be a cost associated with this, to be agreed between the applicant and OV. The application must be supported by the OV. Forms and guidance notes will be available online and when completed should be submitted to the AHVLA Field Services Caernarfon office. Map references indicating all parcels of will need to be supplied on the application form. AHVLA will check, grant and audit all agreements. The ILAM will be withdrawn once the holding falls within the CPH reorganisation.

Any herd keepers moving animals before the removal of SOAs in September and wishing to return them or who think that an interim arrangement will be required once their SOA exemption is withdrawn can make applications in advance.

A Q&A document covering the criteria and the AHVLA application process can be found at:

<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/disease/bovinetuberculosis/cattlecontrols/pre-movement-testing/?lang=en>



Changes to Routine Herd Test eligibility criteria

A Routine Herd Test (RHT) is the surveillance test for bovine TB carried out in low disease risk areas, ie. in the four yearly testing area of England or in a herd with 'moderate risk' in Scotland. RHTs are not carried out in Wales.

The eligibility criteria for Routine Herd Tests (RHT) have been slightly amended. The following categories of animals must be included in all RHTs, unless specifically exempted by the AHVLA:

- Breeding bulls (i.e. entire male animals over 12 months of age)

- Females which have calved
- Young bovines which will be used for breeding, whether they are home-bred or purchased (except calves under six weeks old)
- Pet and other non-commercial cattle resident on the holding.

The updated instructions now make it clear that TB testers have to test all young stock (over 6 weeks old) in the holding that are intended for breeding, regardless of the origin of those animals. This change is to come into effect from September 2014. Instructions are in the process of being updated and all TB test notification letters issued from September onwards will reflect this change.

If you have any questions, please contact the lead Veterinary Officer at your local AHVLA office.

TB Exempt Letters - Risk Based Testing In Scotland

The TB Surveillance Scotland letters are being sent to all Scottish cattle owners in late August. These letters inform the owners on the outcome of the annual Scotland TB Exempt Review as to whether their herd is exempt or not exempt from TB testing in 2015.

Occasionally cattle owners will misread the letters, and think they are required to get a TB test carried out right away. Please remember if you are contacted by one of your clients and there is no work schedule in your practice Sam workbasket for a TB test, we strongly advise you to contact your local AHVLA Field Service office before you arrange any test. Any test carried out which we have not authorised will not be paid for.

The exemption criteria are:

- Herd of less than 20 cattle and one or fewer consignments of cattle from areas of high TB incidence in the last four years

- Herd where more than 25% of cattle are slaughtered annually and with no more than one consignment of cattle moved on from a high risk area in the previous four years.
- Herd where more than 40% of cattle are slaughtered annually, over a four year period.

This is based on data from January 2014 and the classification is applicable throughout 2015. Please note that 'slaughtered' refers to cattle that have been on the holding for at least 60 days that move either direct from farm to slaughterhouse, or direct from farm to market and then direct to slaughterhouse.



New email address for AHVLA Scotland

AHVLA Scotland is now using one central mailbox for distribution of mail - <mailto:AHVLA.Scotland@ahvla.gsi.gov.uk>

All mail will be diverted to the central Scotland mailbox from the closed office mailboxes for a short period of time to ensure no loss of information.

You can still contact the local offices by fax or phone. These contact details can be found on the AHVLA website - <http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/about-us/contact-us/field-services/scotland/>



Easing the burden on your clients

The Inspections and Records Group for Working Smarter, which is a joint industry and government group, recently discussed the importance of OV's working with AHVLA and cattle keepers to ensure that TB tests are completed on time and that TB Test details on Sam records are up to date. This was seen as important for a number of reasons including:

- To allow Rural Inspectorate of Wales (RIW) to co-ordinate Cattle identification Inspections (CII) with

TB tests, where possible, to reduce the number of inspections on farm and therefore the burden on cattle keepers.

- Reduce the number of letters and notices that are sent to cattle keepers either reminding them of the need to have a completed test by the required date, or of overdue TB Test procedures.
- To ensure that cattle keepers are not financially penalised through movement restrictions or a reduction of their CAP subsidy payment under cross compliance regulations which could happen if a TB tests is overdue by even a day.
- To reduce the potential disease risk for cattle keepers by enabling AHVLA to identify and organise the quick removal of reactors from farms.
- Importance of entering details of booking on SAM as soon as TB test is booked

In addition, the Group noted the importance of keeping Sam records up to date. Entering the agreed testing date in the 'test arranged date and time' field in Sam as soon as the test is booked, will assist in co-ordinating any pre-planned cattle identity inspections to coincide with the TB test. The selection of a cattle herd for a CII visit is independent of the TB test.

The group were keen to thank OV's for their support in helping cattle keepers to deal with the consequences of animal disease; in particular bovine TB. They would appreciate the ongoing support of OV's to ensure that TB tests are arranged as early as possible.



New telephone number for AHVLA Wales

AHVLA Field Services in Wales have moved to a using a single non-geographic telephone number: 0300 303 8268. A single, standard-rate number will allow greater flexibility

and improves resilience whilst continuing to offer a bilingual message.

The telephone number for the AHVLA Carmarthen Veterinary Investigation Centre will remain as 01267 235244.

If you experience any problems with using the new number please contact AHVLA by email at:

AHVLA.CymruWales@ahvla.gsi.gov.uk.

OV Instructions

TB Testing in deer, sheep, goats, and pigs

Following consultation with OVs, instructions for TB testing in deer, goats, sheep, and pigs have now been released on the AHVLA website. These can be found at: http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/External_OV_Instructions/index.htm

Draft instructions relating to TB testing of camelids are under development and we aim to release these shortly.

If you'd like to take part in the review of future draft OV instructions please email ahvlaovinstructions@ahvla.gsi.gov.uk to register your interest.

Anthrax Inquiries

Reviewed instructions for anthrax inquiries for OVs have been published on the AHVLA website at: http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/External_OV_Instructions/index.htm

Anthrax is spore-forming and may remain present in soil for years. Despite no recent confirmed clinical cases (the last one was in 2006), vigilance needs to be maintained. Cattle are the main species where anthrax should be considered in cases of sudden unexpected death, but cases can be found in other mammalian species, such as pigs, horses, dogs and in live (usually very sick) animals. Multiple cases have historically been linked to feed (now mitigated by TSE

Feed legislation), flooding and ditching activities. Incidents of flooding in areas like the Somerset levels, earlier in the year, may heighten the risk.

Anthrax should be suspected in the event of a sudden death with no reasonable alternative diagnosis. Before reporting suspect anthrax however, OVs are asked to carefully consider the differential diagnoses, such as lightning strike, dystocia, botulism, poisoning, hypomagnesaemia, farm history, species affected etc. It is a veterinary judgement as to whether anthrax is still suspected, following this discussion.

If anthrax is suspected, the OV, and not a lay member of practice staff, is asked to call AHVLA with full details of the incident. The AHVLA duty vet will be asking for detailed information to ensure the incident has been assessed fully to initiate an inquiry.

The duty vet will normally then initiate the inquiry, authorising (in most cases) an OV to investigate and the duty vet will now sign-off the inquiry following receipt of a satisfactory AN2 Form from the OV. The AHVLA duty vets will also give prior authorisation to the OV to report negative results to the holding, on completion of the investigation, so that the carcass can be disposed of appropriately, after any additional testing the private veterinary surgeon and their client wish to undertake.

If the OV still suspects anthrax following examination of the carcass, its surroundings and a stained smear, the OV will need to urgently contact AHVLA and request a second opinion. An AHVLA veterinary inspector will take over the anthrax inquiry from this point, further assess the blood smears and if anthrax is still suspected, serve any necessary restrictions and send off samples for further analysis.

When reporting a sudden death, OVs should be prepared to provide basic information on the keeper, location, animals and whether there are any other obvious explanations for the sudden death(s) that have been considered as well as anthrax.

TB in other species

When submitting samples to an AHVLA lab on suspicion of TB in a non-bovine, please also inform your local AHVLA Field Services office. This will help ensure the necessary follow-up actions can begin as soon as possible.

If you receive notification of an *M. bovis*-positive culture result from a private or Public Health laboratory, please remind them that they must notify AHVLA without delay. The reporting laboratory will be encouraged to submit a sub-culture to an AHVLA laboratory to confirm their diagnosis and identify the molecular type of the bacterium.

Please contact your local office if you require more information.

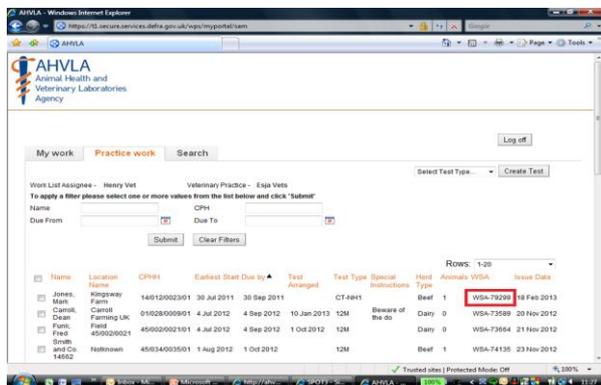
Tips for using Sam

Everyone recognises the importance of accurate and timely submission of TB test information. Here are some tips that might help us achieve this:

Complete correct test on Sam

- Otherwise this affects the TB testing history and results in unnecessary follow-up actions for the customer and their holding(s).

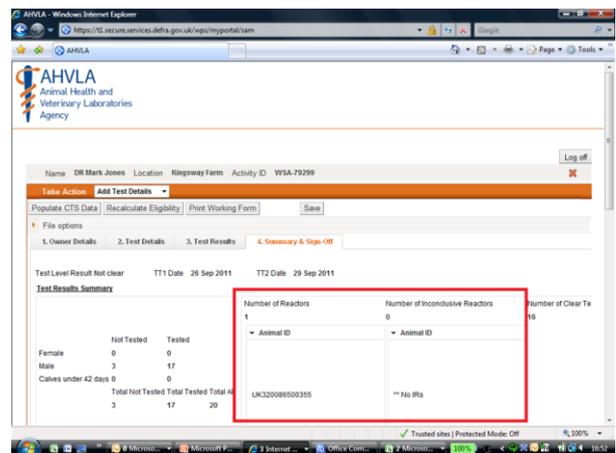
- Hint: In the Practice Workbasket match the WSA reference number from the TB52 Working Form to ensure the correct test is selected.



Enter animal test results accurately for all tested animals that show a reaction

- Sam interprets and classifies these results and automatically determines follow-on actions.

- Hint: Use the Summary & Sign-off tab to check Inconclusive Reactors and Reactors have been correctly identified.



Account for all animals within a complete test, whether tested or not tested

- Otherwise the test will remain marked as a 'part test' and automatic test overdue processes triggered.

- Hint: The test will remain in the Practice Workbasket until fully completed.

Sam online training and guidance is available at: <http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/official-vets/access-to-sam/sam-ov-training-and-guidance.htm>.

Feedback on these tips is welcome and can be provided to:

AHVLAITServiceDesk@ahvla.gsi.gov.uk

Please note that entry of TB testing results on Sam is, in fact, an act of veterinary certification, and the 12 Principles of Certification should be kept in mind.

Claiming for TB Testing

When OV's receive a request from a client to do a TB test which is paid for by AHVLA, they are advised to check the Practice Work tab in Sam, or the latest paper practice work list for all OV's who are not Sam enabled. If the test is not included, please check with your local AHVLA office before undertaking the test as AHVLA is unable to pay for tests that have not been authorised.

Testing for exclusion of notifiable avian disease

From 15 May 2014, a 12-month pilot began to allow testing to rule out the presence of Avian Influenza and or Newcastle Disease viruses. This applies to scenarios where a private veterinary surgeon (PVS) does not consider these diseases likely to be responsible for the clinical signs, but they cannot be entirely excluded from a list of differential diagnosis. This is part of AHVLA's ongoing commitment to increase the autonomy and responsibility of PVSs.

The collection of samples for such testing by the PVS should only be undertaken following consultation and agreement with an AHVLA duty vet.

The pilot only applies to flocks of chickens and turkeys, and the cost of collecting and submitting samples together with the costs of the laboratory testing will be entirely borne by the keeper.

The samples must be submitted using the appropriate submission form (VLA2) to AHVLA Weybridge marked with the case reference number issued by the AHVLA Duty Vet.

For disease scenarios in poultry, where Avian Influenza or Newcastle Disease may be the cause, or are suspected, then standard report case procedures for dealing with a notifiable disease will be followed.

Further information including the protocol can be found at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/disease-control/notifiable/>

Information regarding the submission form and costs of laboratory services are available at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/tests-and-services/lab-services/>

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-scientific/>

Changes in applying for export health certification

Over the last 12 months AHVLA's Centre for International Trade has changed the way exporters apply for certificates by introducing interactive PDF application forms for some certificates covering China, Russia and the USA.

Feedback from those areas using this new process has been positive as turnaround times have been improved and exporters have been able to complete the data within the certificate, avoiding the requirement for AHVLA to transpose the data.

It has therefore been decided to expand the use of the PDF application process across all industry sectors and certificates. Only the application process will change, as the format and appearance of certificates will not be affected.

A number of Export Health Certificates (EHCs) are currently being converted along with an accompanying Export Application (EXA) form, and it is intended that these will be rolled out later in 2014.

Each PDF will be an interactive version of the EHC being applied for and will enable the applicant to type specific information into text fields built into the certificate. The completed PDF will form the actual EHC produced by AHVLA. Once completed by the exporter, the PDF can either be sent directly to the OV or completion (this will enable a fully typed certificate), or it can be sent to the Centre for International Trade, prior to the OV completing a handwritten certificate.

In both cases when the PDF is received by AHVLA, the content of the PDF will be printed on crown gold watermarked paper (with security features added) and issued to

the nominated OV for completion and signature as per the current process.

Change in OV instructions for TB skin testing

The OV Instructions for TB skin testing have recently been reviewed, and can be viewed at:

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

As previously advised OVs are not to use the following 'Not tested Reasons':

- Escaped at TT2
- Not Presented at TT2
- Dangerous/unmanageable

We are looking at the impact of removing these codes. In the meantime OVs are requested to not use these categories. If these circumstances arise please contact your local AHVLA office, as it is important to seek advice from the duty vet as to what practical steps need to be taken. It is rare for OVs to need to use these codes and AHVLA are keen to ensure that we provide case by case advice in such circumstances

Where discrepancies are identified between the total number of animals TB tested and the number registered on BCMS, OVs are required to discuss this with the owner and, where possible, provide justification within the "test comments box" and use the appropriate code within Sam. For none Sam registered practices, please attached a note to the TB52.

To enable better data quality, OVs are reminded to read the Official Veterinarian Practice Guide to ensure that animals are not unnecessarily being recorded as "not tested".

For further information please contact your local AHVLA Office.