



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 28/25

Introduction of Approved Blood Samplers in private veterinary businesses in England and Wales

Date issued: 14 July 2025

Purpose

1. To inform Official Veterinarians (OVs) and Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) of the introduction of Approved Blood Samplers (ABSs) in private veterinary businesses in England and Wales. This will be from **31 July 2025**.

Background

2. Suitably trained Animal Health Officers (AHOs) in APHA routinely carry out blood sampling of farm animals (cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and camelids) and poultry.
3. The Veterinary Surgery (Exemptions) Order 2015 permits lay persons to collect blood samples for the control or eradication of infectious disease in farm animals and poultry, and sampling for the presence of veterinary medicines residues in farm animals.
4. During their blood sampling training, AHOs must be under the direct supervision of an APHA veterinarian. Once they have completed their practical training and hold a certificate of proficiency issued by APHA (on behalf of Ministers), they are permitted to take blood samples from farm animals and poultry under APHA veterinary direction.
5. From **31 July 2025**, para-veterinary professionals in private veterinary businesses can be authorised by APHA as Approved Blood Samplers (ABSs).

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6. ABSs will only be permitted to work in England and Wales (not Scotland) and will only be allowed to blood sample cattle.

Information

Overview

7. The Veterinary Surgery (Exemptions) Order 2015 permits ABSs to collect blood samples from cattle for the purposes of controlling or eradicating infectious disease by the Ministers.
8. ABSs will be authorised by APHA to carry out blood sampling of cattle in England and Wales under the direction and supervision of an OV who is an Approved Veterinary Supervisor - Blood Sampling (AVS-BS) or deputy AVS-BS.
9. ABSs will only be authorised to carry out blood sampling that has been allocated or otherwise approved by APHA. Sampling can only be conducted in accordance with the appropriate legislation.

Eligibility criteria

10. The minimum eligibility criteria for any person wishing to enrol for ABS training are:
 - a minimum age of 18 years
 - completion of satisfactory identification and basic Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) security checks before enrolment on the training. Candidates need to await the results of their DBS checks before commencing training and this needs to be considered by employers 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
 - to have a minimum of six months previous livestock handling experience
11. Confirmation of compliance with these criteria is the responsibility of the ABS and their employer. The employer will be required to declare that these criteria are met prior to the ABS starting their training.

Training

12. Theory training and practical assessment for ABSs will be provided by APHA's contracted training provider, Improve International Limited. Candidates will need to complete the Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional (AHP)) - Approved Blood Sampler (OCQ(AHP) - ABS) course and online examination

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which must be invigilated by a member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS).

13. Following successful completion of the theory training and online examination, conditional authorisation for the ABS to complete blood sampling of cattle is granted by APHA for a period of six months. Prior to starting the practical training, the ABS must also nominate an AVS-BS and deputy, who will be required to accept their role and responsibilities.
14. AVS-BSs and deputies must have the following qualifications:
 - they must be an authorised OV and hold the Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary) - Essential Skills (OCQ(V) - ES)
 - depending on the purpose of the blood sampling being carried out by the ABS, it may be necessary for AVS-BSs and deputies to be appointed as inspectors by the Agency under the relevant disease-specific legislation before they are able to supervise the ABS for that purpose. It is the responsibility of the AVS-BS and deputies to ensure that they are appointed as an inspector where appropriate and have confirmation of that appointment from the Agency before supervising an ABS.
15. The number of ABSs under the supervision of any single AVS-BS is capped at only one ABS in training per AVS-BS at any time and no more than two ABSs at any given time. At any time an AVS-BS can therefore have one ABS in training plus one authorised ABS or two authorised ABSs. The AVS-BS can also act as a deputy for other ABSs simultaneously.
16. Whilst conditionally authorised, the ABS will only be able to carry out blood sampling of cattle under the direct and continuous supervision (i.e. physical presence) of their AVS-BS or deputy. ABSs will be required to blood sample a minimum of 100 cattle on at least three different holdings, including both beef and dairy cattle. A minimum of 95 blood samples must be collected from the coccygeal vein and a minimum of 5 blood samples collected from the jugular vein of cattle.
17. The AVS-BS must sign off the training requirement for the numbers of cattle blood sampled once minimum numbers are met. A practical assessment must be conducted by the AVS-BS once they consider the ABS to be competent and at least the minimum number of cattle have been blood sampled.
18. On passing the practical assessment, APHA will issue full authorisation to the ABS to blood sample cattle. All the requirements must be met and case logs submitted prior to authorisation being granted. Once fully authorised, the ABS can carry out blood sampling of cattle under the general direction of their AVS-BS and deputy. This does not require routine presence of the AVS-BS or deputy on farm with the ABS.

19. The AVS-BS must complete an on-farm assessment of the ABS blood sampling at least 20 cattle between four and six months after the ABS's full authorisation is granted.
20. Revalidation of the OCQ(AHP) - ABS (theory only) is required four years from the date of successful completion of the OCQ(AHP) - ABS theory training examination and thereafter every four years. ABSs will also need to meet all other requirements for the role, including an on-farm audit conducted by the AVS-BS in the four year revalidation interval and confirmation at the time of revalidation from the AVS-BS of continued competence in blood sampling.

Quality assurance

21. The performance of ABSs carrying out blood sampling of cattle will be monitored for quality assurance purposes. This monitoring will include:
- reports from the AVS-BS or deputy who are required to monitor the delivery of the ABS function
 - auditing of blood sample submission forms and sample packaging
 - on-farm audits
 - investigation of complaints relating to individual ABSs

Action

22. From **31st July 2025**, the OCQ(AHP) – ABS course will be available on the Improve International AHP website.
23. Individuals wishing to become authorised as an ABS should first refer to the eligibility criteria.
24. If the eligibility criteria are met, the individual should register with Improve International and enrol on the OCQ(AHP) – ABS course. **Enrolment will not be possible prior to 31 July 2025.**

Further information

25. Further information for veterinary practices and individuals will be available in the ABS instructions on the Improve [Official Veterinarian Training](#) and [Official Animal Health Paraprofessional Training](#) websites from **31 July 2025**.
26. Any queries relating to ABSs should be directed to the APHA Official Veterinarian Team at CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk