



News from your APHA OV Team Issue 3

March 2025

Welcome to the third OV Newsletter.

We hope you will find this edition informative and useful. If you have any questions about the content or any ideas for future newsletters, please contact the APHA OV team either via telephone or email.

Email CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk

Tel. 020 8026 1094 (08:30 – 17:00 Monday to Friday excluding public and bank holidays).



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Message from Sue Quinney, Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs

The OV system is critical to delivery of the GB governments' policies and thanks to the diligence of OVs, we can continue to provide assurance to our stakeholders and trading partners that they can trust our system. Thank you to all of you who have continued to deliver OV work to a high standard.

To ensure the maintenance of such high standards, APHA carries out quality assurance on OV work and this can lead, on occasions, to the need to investigate the actions of individual OVs. Compromising standards risks disease control, trade, GB reputation and the reputation of all OVs. This newsletter details findings from disciplinary investigations conducted over the past 3 years. This will hopefully provide assurance to the majority that robust action will be taken when a minority of OVs risk the reputation of our system by intentionally failing to uphold the standards. You can also be assured that the investigation process is fair and proportionate.

Prompts and reminders

We've tried to include prompts and reminders for areas where we have had recent queries or issues that need to be shared with the wider OV, AHP and FCCO community.

Training and Authorisation

- OVs are reminded to ensure they are familiar with the content of the [OV13 Policy for authorisation of Official Veterinarians \(OVs\) in Great Britain](#)
- Approved Veterinary Supervisors (AVSs) and deputies, along with their ATTs, must ensure they are familiar with the [TR541 Policy for APHA authorisation of ATTs in England and Wales](#).
- OVs and ATTs are responsible for keeping their details on their Improve International training account accurate and up to date. Incorrect data could lead to issues and may even affect authorisation status.

Revalidation of Official Control Qualifications, Veterinary (OCQ(V)s) – internal verification

As part of quality assurance for the OCQ training, the International School of Veterinary Postgraduate Studies (ISVPS) carry out checks on a proportion of completed revalidations. This is called internal verification. ISVPS has brought to APHA's attention that some OVs have failed to upload the required case scenarios / certification exercises when revalidating, but have signed a declaration to confirm that they have done so. Please be aware that this is not in compliance with the RCVS Principles of Certification, particularly principle 1.

OVs referred to APHA in respect of this matter will have the associated authorisation immediately suspended. Depending on circumstances, APHA may

trigger a formal investigation and OVs could be referred to the RCVS if there are concerns of professional misconduct.

Some OVs are submitting certification exercises/case scenarios of a poor standard. In these cases, ISVPS provides feedback and an opportunity for OVs to update them to the required standard. If these are not updated by the deadline allocated by ISVPS, the case is referred to APHA and the relevant authorisation may be suspended.

Instructions and Communications

All OV, AHP & FCCO instructions, newsletters, Briefing Notes and forms can now be found on the Improve International websites:

Official Veterinarians – [Official Veterinarian Training](#)

Animal Health Paraprofessionals (AHPs) & Food Competent Certifying Officers (FCCOs) - [Official Animal Health Paraprofessional Training](#)

All content has been removed from the Vet Gateway.

Principles of Certification

OVs are reminded that they must consider the RCVS principles of certification before signing any certification or declarations. This applies to all OV work areas.

Details can be found here - [Certification](#)

TB specific information

Tuberculin

A reminder to OVs, ATTs and OV practices that they must ensure at each skin testing event that the tuberculin used is within date and that the vials used have the same kit batch number. Failure to do so may lead to invalidation of the test. Different sizes of vials or different kit batch numbers must not be mixed at the same test.

TB audit

All testers are required to comply with the requirement for on farm audit of their TB testing. To enable this, you must ensure that you meet the requirement to update Sam in advance with dates and times of tuberculin skin tests allocated to

you. Failure to do so may result in suspension of your authorisation. This applies to all tests including pre- and post- movement testing and other private tests.

Comparative (Head-to-Head) Study of the use of the Enferplex and IDEXX antibody tests alongside the Gamma-interferon test

The Comparative (Head-to-Head) Study of the use of the Enferplex and IDEXX antibody tests alongside the Gamma-interferon test in OTFW breakdowns in England and Wales is ongoing and APHA still needs to recruit new breakdown herds in both England and Wales. New TB breakdowns are considered those in herds that have not experienced a previous breakdown in the last five years. If following discussions with one of your clients whose herd is undergoing an eligible TB breakdown, you both feel that the herd could benefit from participating in this study, please ask your client to contact APHA to discuss their possible participation. Please refer to [APHA Briefing Note 27/23](#) for further information and contact details.

Update on the bTB Cattle Vaccination Field Trials

In March 2024 all GB administrations made the decision to move to a further phase (Phase 3) of the Cattle TB vaccine field trials. The purpose is to gather additional data on the specificity of the new Detecting Infected among Vaccinated Animals (DIVA) skin test and explore options to optimise its performance.

Phase 3 will assess the DIVA skin test performance on a broader cohort of BCG vaccinated animals in selected herds to further inform our collective planning for delivery.

The field trials will be taking place on commercial livestock farms located in the Low-Risk Area (LRA) of England or the Low TB Area (LTBA) of Wales. The trials are expected to commence in July 2025 and due to be completed in 2026/7.

As part of the project, APHA is seeking to collaborate with Official Veterinarians/Private vets to support the trials on suitable farms.

If you are interested in supporting this crucial research project, and have farms under your care that you believe would be willing to participate and which meet the inclusion criteria detailed on the [TB Hub](#), please discuss this opportunity with the relevant keeper/owner and encourage/help them to get in touch with APHA by either emailing TB.Advice@apha.gov.uk or by filling in the [Expression of Interest](#) form.

Details of contractual arrangements and incentives of taking part will follow on enquiry.

Exports specific information

Specific OV66 authorisation for export related certification of dogs and cats to Australia.

In order for dogs and cats to be eligible for the ten-day minimum quarantine period on arrival in Australia from GB, OVs must be OV66-authorized when completing certain export-related certification for these movements.

Details can be found in the OV instructions, [Official Veterinarian Training](#) page 48 and Briefing Note, [Export of Dogs and Cats to Australia – New Process Agreed](#).

When submitting an [OV65 Application Form](#) for OV66 authorisation, the email address on the form must match the personal email address on your Improve International account. The email address cannot be a shared email address and must be used only by the applicant.

Please note that, following the granting of the OV66 authorisation, it may take up to 7 days for Australian authorities to be notified of your approval. So please do not send ID declarations to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) until at least a week after OV66 authorisation is granted.

Queries relating to the OV65 application or OV66 authorisation process should be addressed to the APHA OV team. Queries relating to the actual exports process need to be referred to the Centre for International Trade in Carlisle. See contact details below.

Please ensure that you have the correct authorisation before signing the ID declarations; falsely certifying your official status is very serious. When this also involves the Authorities of another country it can have serious implications as it undermines their trust in our OV system and our certification standards.

Please be aware that DAFF is checking the OV66 authorisation status in respect of 100% ID declarations.

APHA Laboratory Reports

APHA have been sent a number of laboratory reports recently (apparently APHA reports) for verification of authenticity. This is because certifying OVs or importing countries have suspected the reports to be fraudulent and therefore have been unable to trust the results for certification purposes.

In some instances, the reports have been altered by veterinary practices (e.g. to remove pricing information) but the main details are unchanged. Please be

aware that original unaltered laboratory reports must be used to support certification of exports.

In other instances, the reports are not authentic. They may use the same format and logo as real APHA laboratory reports, but they have not been produced by APHA and the results they show are not valid. Please be aware that some laboratory reports you are presented with may not be authentic. If you have any doubt, you should contact the laboratory detailed in the report to confirm its veracity.

Find a professional to certify Export Health Certificates (EHCs)

If you want your practice to be listed on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) as a provider of export certification services, please contact the OV team and they will send you an ET177 form to complete. Please also contact the OV team if you wish for a current entry to be removed or amended. Please note that the 'Find a professional to certify EHCs' listing is optional and separate from the EHC Online system.

Whistleblowing

OVs and ATTs can report issues or raise concerns about non-compliant TB testing (or indeed other OV tasks) without their identity being revealed.

The TB Hub contains [guidance on whistleblowing](#) and the APHA whistleblowing email address intelunit@apha.gov.uk

This route provides very good assurance to those who have concerns about reprisals, should they report colleagues' activities.

The relevant section in the TB Hub clarifies that:

All intelligence is handled in accordance with the [National Intelligence Model Code of Practice](#). This means that the source (the person reporting the intelligence; their name and email address) is protected and their identity is not revealed to anyone outside of APHA's intelligence unit. Any information shared outside of the unit is sanitised to protect the identity of the source.

Allegations of Non-Compliance

Notification of alleged non-compliance originates from various sources including QA findings, complaints from farmers, vets and trading partners for example. Most cases are resolved without the need for formal investigation, but each is

assessed and proportionate action taken. Some allegations are not substantiated, and no further action is taken. Other cases are followed up with a formal letter providing advice as required. Allegations of a more serious nature or which require more extensive investigation, trigger formal investigation.

Summary of 2023 formal investigations:

In 2023, investigation cases related to OVs and ATTs in England and Scotland. There were no investigation cases for OVs in Wales.

- England cases - 13
- Wales cases - 0
- Scotland cases – 1

Details of the formal investigations carried out in 2023 (2022 figures in red for comparison)		
1. Number of cases progressed to formal investigation		14 (9)
Personnel:		
Number of OVs formally investigated		11 (one OV investigated twice) (6)
Number of ATTs formally investigated		2 (3)
Number of CSOs formally investigated		0 (0)
Number of FCCOs formally investigated		0 (0)
2. Nature of allegations:		
TB Testing (TT) related	OV	2 (1)
	ATT	2 (3)
Exports (EX) related	OV	6 (2)
Notifiable disease outbreak related	OV	3 (3)
Other (welfare)	OV	1 (0)
	ATT	0 (0)
3. ATT Review Panel outcome summary (more than one outcome may apply per case):		
Authorisation revoked		0 (1)
Improvement plan		1 (2)
Revalidation / retraining		2 (1)
Re-reading of rules / procedures		1 (2)
Testing restrictions (testing under supervision for a specified period)		1 (1)
Authorisation suspended		2 (0)
4. OV Review Panel outcome summary (more than one outcome may apply per case):		
Authorisation revoked		6 (3)
Authorisation suspended		1 (1)
Written advice provided		1 (2)
Biosecurity checklist required		0 (1)
Improvement plan		0 (2)
Revalidation/online training		2 (2)
No action		3 (1)
5. Referral to RCVS	OV	4 (3)

Summary of 2024 investigations:

We have yet to complete all investigation cases from last year, but numbers are included below. What we are witnessing is an increase in the number of formal investigation cases each year. In 2024, there was a marked increase in the number of TB cases, the majority of which relate to failure to comply with the standard testing procedures. This is very concerning. Please note that where fraud is suspected, APHA will refer for criminal investigation. Concerns of professional misconduct are referred to RCVS.

- Number of TB cases – **17**
- Number of Exports cases – **3**
- Other – **0**

Outcomes of cases referred to RCVS:

In 2024, the RCVS held 3 disciplinary hearings for OV cases referred by APHA. Outcomes can be found on the RCVS website [Disciplinary Committee hearings](#)

One received a six-month suspension from the RCVS register for export related non-compliances (22/4/24).

Two OVs were removed from the register – one for export related non-compliances (27/8/24) and the other for TB testing non-compliances (7/10/24).

Useful Links

Animal Exports & Imports:

Centre for International Trade

Telephone: 03000 200 301

For contact email addresses see GOV.UK [Animal and Plant Health Agency - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Pet Travel:

Bringing your pet dog, cat or ferret to Great Britain

pettravel@apha.gov.uk

APHA Pet Travel Scheme helpline Telephone: 0370 241 1710

Exports of pet animals (cats, dogs, ferrets and all other small pet animals)

petexports@apha.gov.uk

Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) Queries:

In England, tel. 03000 200 301 or TB.Advice@apha.gov.uk

In Wales, tel. 0300 303 8268 or apha.cymruwales@apha.gov.uk

In Scotland, contact your local Field Services office [Field Services office](#)

Improve Veterinary Education: -

Main Tel. Number 0330 202 0380

enquiries@improve-ov.com

Opening hours

08:30-17:30

www.improve-ov.com

www.improve-ahp.com

EHC Online:

[How to register for export health certificate \(EHC\) online - GOV.UK
\(www.gov.uk\)](#)

General queries should be directed to the Centre for International Trade

Tel: 03000 200 301

Govt. Gateway account/login related queries to the APHA Service Desk

Tel: 03300 416999

aphaservicedesk@apha.gov.uk

Sam OV support

For queries about using Sam or the initial registration process please contact the Sam support desk on:

03300 416999 [Email Sam support desk](#)

Get in touch with the OV Team

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