Animal & Plant Health Agency

APHA Briefing Note 15/21

Improved Digital Security Measures for Export Health Certificates Printed on Crown Vellum Watermarked Paper

Date issued: 20 May 2021 – last updated 11 June 2021, 8 July and 18 August 2021

Purpose

1. To inform Certifying Officers (Official Veterinarians (OVs) and Food Competent Certifying Officers (FCCO)) located in England, Scotland and Wales of new digital security measures being introduced for Export Health Certificates (EHC) to replace existing Crown Vellum Watermarked security paper. Updates from the previous version are highlighted in yellow.

Background

2. EHCs for the United Kingdom to Third Countries are normally issued using Crown Vellum Watermarked security paper to provide anti-fraud assurance to Importing Competent Authorities of the authenticity of UK certification.

3. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, Defra agreed with a number of Third Country Competent Authorities for the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) to produce EHCs on plain white paper as a temporary measure to assist both APHA in issuing EHCs and to facilitate certification procedures of export services.

4. Defra are now working on a solution to remove Crown Vellum Watermarked security paper across all countries and replace with plain white paper, with improved digital security measures.

5. This feature will apply to EHCs issued through the EHC Online service, for Third Country Competent Authorities that have been approached to adopt this so far. Initial use of the new technical solution will take place during a Private Beta trial

during which time, Defra and APHA will be requesting feedback on the new procedures from Importing Competent Authorities and Certifying Officers.

6. The list of Third Country Competent Authorities involved in the private beta trial can be found in Appendix 1.

7. All other EHCs will continue to be:
   - Issued using white paper as a temporary measure during coronavirus restrictions. More information can be found in [APHA Briefing Note 16/20](#)
   - Issued using Crown Vellum Watermarked security paper
   - Issued on white paper where Crown Vellum Watermarked Paper is not required e.g. EHCs for the European Union (EU) and Northern Ireland that can be printed on plain white paper as a business as usual procedure.

8. When the EHC is dispatched to the Certifying Officer, a 12-digit code is generated and visible on the first page of the certificate.

9. The certificate serial number and crown dithered watermark will be added to all pages of the EHC. The crown dithered watermark consists of a crown in the centre of the page and the certificate serial number displayed as a diagonal watermark and is being introduced to continue to provide anti-fraud assurance to Importing Competent Authorities of the authenticity of UK certification, as a permanent replacement for crown vellum watermarked security paper.

10. Appendix 2 provides an example of an EHC including the dithered watermark.

11. The Certifying Officer must print the EHC on plain white paper. The 12-digit code and watermarks will be visible when the certificate is printed on plain white paper.

12. EHCs can be printed directly from your internet browser. Printing results may vary depending on the combination of your internet browser (e.g. Microsoft Edge, Google Chrome) and the device used to print the EHC. This can be managed through your printer settings, or by using an alternative internet browser

13. To print an EHC from your Certifier Portal in the EHC Online service from your internet browser:
    - From your case management dashboard, click the blue hyperlink **Summary** next to the case to view the details of the case
    - Click the **Editable Certificate** hyperlink on the summary screen to open the certificate
    - Click the **Print** icon and then print
    - The EHC will then print.

14. It is your responsibility to ensure that the certified EHC is legible when printed, copied or scanned. You should adjust the printer, scanner and photocopier settings to ensure the contents of the certificate are clear, that the certificate looks authentic and can be inspected by the Importing Competent Authority.

15. <mark>Use of [Adobe Reader](#) is recommended if you are experiencing any difficulty printing an EHC with the dithered watermark security features from your internet browser.</mark>

16. Certifying Officers must print EHCs that contain a dithered watermark on white paper. For EHCs that are three or four pages in length, the EHC can be printed as an A3 booklet if A3 printing facilities are available. If A3 booklet printing facilities are not available, the EHC can be printed on A4 white paper which can be double or single sided. If the EHCs consists of multiple pieces of paper, Certifying Officers must adhere to APHA's guidance on fan stamping of non-EU EHCs which is available on the [APHA Vet Gateway](#).

17. Where an export application was submitted into the EHC Online service prior to the Private Beta commencement dates in Appendix 1, some EHCs will display the crown dithered watermark but will not display the 12-digit code. This is because the 12-dgit code can only be generated when the EHC is originally dispatched to your Certifier portal. Defra have informed the Importing Competent Authorities that there may be a small number of EHC affected in this way. These EHCs can still be certified for export.

18. After completing inspection/examination of the export consignment and certification procedures to complete the plain white paper EHC, the Certifying Officer must retain a copy for their own records for two years.

19. The Importing Competent Authority can enter the 12-digit code (from the certified EHC), into a new verification service on GOV.UK, to confirm the authenticity of the certificate (whether it matches APHA records of what has been issued) as part of the security features.

20. APHA will respond to any correspondence from the Importing Competent Authority, if any queries are received as to the authenticity of a white paper EHC. APHA may contact Certifying Officers to complete authenticity checks should the need arise.

Benefits of New Anti-Fraud Security Measures

21. More certificates can be auto-routed directly to the Certifying Officer on the EHC Online service, where there are no disease clearance requirements within an EHC.

22. Same day certification is possible for short turn around exports, where APHA are able to auto-route EHCs directly to the Certifying Officer.

23. EHCs will no longer need to be printed and posted by APHA, and therefore EHCs will not be 'lost in the post'.

24. Where a disease clearance is required by APHA, this can be uploaded to the export case on the EHC Online service, providing the Certifying Officer with all documentation they require from APHA in one single location.

25. Longer term, APHA will be able to review whether Certifying Officers can obtain their own disease clearances from the APHA Vet Gateway, please see APHA Briefing Note 38/20 which introduced this procedure for EU EHCs.

26. Your exporter will no longer have to organise couriers or special delivery posts for replacement certification or short notice certification.

Further Information

- Certification guidance can be found in the Exports guidance on APHA Vet Gateway

- Any queries relating to new Anti-Fraud Security measures should be sent to: exports@apha.gov.uk. Include the words 'Crown Dithered Watermarked EHC' in the subject line of any email queries.

  Issued: 20/05/2021

Appendix 1

The list of Third Countries that have agreed to the use new EHC anti-fraud security measures are:

- Australia week commencing 24 May 2021

- Hong Kong week commencing 24 May 2021

- Japan week commencing 12 July 2021

- United Arab Emirates (UAE) week commencing 14 June 2021.

Appendix 2

An example of an EHC including the new dithered watermark: