Animal and Plant Health Agency

OV69 Policy for APHA authorisation of Approved Blood Samplers (ABSs) in England and Wales

August 2026

Change notice

The following changes have been made to Version 2:

- Paragraphs 23-25 added regarding the 6-month audit conducted by the AVS-BS after full ABS authorisation has been granted

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Definitions

1. For the purposes of this document, the following definitions apply:

- **Agency** means the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), the competent authority for the purposes of this authorisation and relevant legislation
- **Approved Blood Sampler (ABS)** means a non-veterinarian appointed by the Agency who is not an employee of Government and who holds the Official Controls Qualification (OCQ) (Animal Health Paraprofessional) - Approved Blood Sampler (OCQ(AHP) - ABS) certificate permitting them to perform blood sampling of cattle on behalf of APHA in England and Wales only
- **Approved Veterinary Supervisor - Blood Sampling (AVS-BS)** means a Veterinary Surgeon appointed by the Agency who is confirmed as the primary supervisor for an ABS
- **Authorisation** means permission granted by the Agency to an ABS who has successfully completed both the theory component of the training provided by the approved training provider and the practical assessment which enables the ABS to carry out that function under the general direction of an AVS-BS without the need for direct personal supervision
- **Cattle** means domestic cattle of the genus *Bos*, as well as captive bovines of the genera *Bubalus* (buffalo) and *Bison*
- **Certification** means the act of being awarded a certificate of competence after completing the OCQ(AHP) - ABS approved course of study and passing the final assessment offered by an approved training provider
- **Conditional Authorisation** means the limited permission granted by the Agency to an ABS who has successfully completed the theory component of the training provided by the approved training provider to carry out blood sampling of cattle in England and Wales under the direct personal supervision of an AVS-BS. Such limited approval is granted for a six month period and may not be converted to full authorisation until successful completion of a practical assessment
- **Day** means a day in the calendar, including Saturday, Sunday, bank and public holidays
- **Deputy Approved Veterinary Supervisor – Blood Sampling (Deputy AVS-BS)** means a Veterinary Surgeon appointed by the Agency who is confirmed as the secondary supervisor for an ABS, supervising them when the AVS-BS is unavailable
- **Direct personal supervision** means that the AVS-BS is present and giving the ABS their undivided personal attention
- **General direction** means that the AVS-BS instructs the ABS as to the blood sampling tasks to be performed but is not necessarily present
- **Holding** means a place where animals are kept, held or handled
- **Official controls** means any form of control that the competent authority performs for the verification of compliance with feed and food law, animal health and animal welfare rules
- **Official Veterinarian (OV)** means a Veterinary Surgeon appointed by the Agency to perform specific tasks on behalf of the Agency

- **Revalidation** means the renewal of an OCQ(AHP) - ABS qualification prior to its date of expiry to enable continuation of both the qualification and authorisation. Revalidation of the OCQ(AHP) - ABS is required at four year intervals
- **Working day** means a day that is not a Saturday, Sunday, bank holiday or public holiday

Introduction

1. This Policy for Authorisation of Approved Blood Samplers (ABSs) sets out the relationship between the Animal and Plant Health Agency (hereafter referred to as "the Agency") and authorised ABSs qualified in the Official Control Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional) - Approved Blood Sampler (OCQ(AHP) - ABS) and who are not employees of Government. The Agency acts on behalf of the relevant Ministers in England and Wales to authorise OCQ(AHP) - ABS trained individuals to carry out blood sampling of cattle on behalf of those Ministers.

2. To facilitate the effective implementation of official controls, Agency authorised ABSs may provide support to Official Veterinarians (OVs) delivering work on behalf of Ministers. ABSs can only act under the direction and supervision of an Approved Veterinary Supervisor - Blood Sampling (AVS-BS).

3. The Veterinary Surgery (Exemptions) Order 2015 allows the taking of blood from cattle **"for use in diagnosis for the control or eradication by the Ministers of infectious disease" only** and only if the following conditions are satisfied:
    - the person taking the blood does so while acting under the direct personal supervision of a qualified person i.e. the ABS is supervised by an AVS-BS or deputy AVS-BS during the period of conditional authorisation, or
    - the person taking the blood is certified by the appropriate Minister as proficient to take blood from cattle, having passed such tests or examinations in the taking of blood from cattle as are specified in the certificate, and the person takes the blood while acting under the general direction of a qualified person (a Veterinary Surgeon). This applies once the ABS is fully authorised working under the general direction of an AVS-BS

4. An ABS shall only carry out blood sampling of **cattle** (as defined above) in England and Wales as directed by their AVS-BS.

5. Blood sampling can only be carried out by an ABS where:
    - the purpose is permitted under the Veterinary Surgery (Exemptions) Order 2015 **and**
    - APHA has either allocated or otherwise approved the sampling

6. An ABS cannot carry out blood sampling for any purpose other than that allocated or otherwise approved by APHA under this authorisation.
7. Future legislative changes, government policy or other factors may necessitate a revision of the conditions contained herein. In the event of a revision, ABSs will be informed and should an ABS not wish to continue on the revised terms, the authorisation can be terminated by mutual consent.

Authorisation

8. The Agency will authorise as an ABS any person who:
   - holds a valid Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional)-Approved Blood Sampler (OCQ(AHP) - ABS) certificate, demonstrating their competence to undertake the relevant activities
   - is regarded by the Agency as suitable for carrying out tasks on behalf of Ministers, considering any previous performance as an official
   - is carrying out blood sampling of cattle as part of a veterinary business under the supervision of an AVS-BS and a deputy AVS-BS

9. The OCQ(AHP) - ABS is an accredited qualification achieved following the successful completion of training and assessment by a government approved provider (hereafter referred to as “training provider”). This training consists of theory and practical training and is not considered completed or capable of being certified until the candidate has successfully passed both elements.

10. To be eligible to enrol on the theory training, the ABS’s employer must declare that they meet all the requirements for employment as an ABS. An ABS must:
    - be at least 18 years of age at initial application
    - have passed Identification and basic Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) security checks
    - as a minimum have 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 (EHO)
    - have a minimum of six months previous livestock handling experience

11. Conditional authorisation is granted following successful completion of the OCQ(AHP) - ABS theory training and pending a practical assessment. The issuance of conditional authorisation by the Agency can take up to 10 working days from completion of the theory course. The training cannot be considered complete until the candidate has nominated their AVS-BS and the AVS-BS has accepted the role and responsibilities.

12. Once the OCQ(AHP) - ABS training has been successfully completed and the ABS provided with their certification from the training provider, the Agency will complete the conditional authorisation process and send the successful candidate the following:
    - an ABS authorisation letter
    - a unique identifier number

13. When conditional authorisation is granted, an ABS will also be appointed as an inspector on behalf of the Secretary of State and Welsh Ministers under the relevant legislation. The appointment will continue until such a point as an ABS ceases to carry out blood sampling on behalf of the Agency. At that point, an ABS will be removed from the Appointment Annex.

14. Inspector appointment is specific to the work area being delivered by the ABS and provides legal powers to take blood samples from cattle for a particular purpose. Not all areas of work require inspector appointment but, where it is required, an ABS must ensure that they have received confirmation of the relevant appointment from the Agency before commencing any work. It may be necessary for APHA to add additional

appointment under the relevant legislation when a new area of work is allocated to an ABS.

15. Candidates cannot and must not act as an ABS until they have received confirmation of their conditional authorisation and where required, inspector status.

16. Conditional authorisation is granted for a six month period and may not be converted to full authorisation until successful completion of the practical training and assessment. An ABS with conditional authorisation is permitted to carry out blood sampling of cattle under the **direct personal supervision** of an AVS-BS.

17. Authorisation will be issued on completing a practical assessment with satisfactory results. To qualify for the practical assessment, the ABS must sample a minimum of 100 cattle over at least three different holdings, including both beef and dairy cattle whilst conditionally authorised. 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. However, the sampling of additional animals may be required before the AVS-BS considers the individual competent to blood sample both the coccygeal and jugular sites. A maximum of 35 samples collected from any single holding during the period of conditional authorisation can be counted towards the minimum requirement of 100 animals sampled.

18. The practical assessment is conducted by the AVS-BS once the individual is considered competent and at least the minimum criteria as described in paragraph 17 above have been met and confirmed by the AVS-BS.

19. The training provider will notify the ABS of the date of expiry of the conditional authorisation and will send reminders to the ABS's registered email address prior to that date.

20. If the ABS is unable to meet the eligibility criteria for the practical assessment prior to the expiry of the conditional authorisation, an extension can be requested. The request must be submitted to the Agency prior to the expiry date.

21. Authorisation shall be completed within five working days of notification to the Agency of successful completion of the practical assessment as notified by the AVS - BS. A certificate will be issued, accessible via the ABS's training record.

22. Once authorised, an ABS must work under the **general direction** of an AVS-BS but may perform blood sampling without the physical presence of an AVS-BS.

23. The AVS-BS must carry out an on-farm assessment of the ABS following full authorisation using the Evaluation of ABS Performance by the Approved Veterinary Supervisor - Blood Sampling (OV72).

24. The on-farm audit of the blood sampling of at least 20 cattle must be completed between four and six months after the ABS's full authorisation is granted. The AVS-BS needs to confirm on the ABS's training record that the audit has been completed successfully and a copy of the Evaluation of ABS Performance by the Approved Veterinary Supervisor - Blood Sampling (OV72) must be uploaded onto the training record. The results will be held on the ABS's training record and available for APHA

review.

25. Failure to complete the assessment and to upload the Evaluation of ABS Performance by the Approved Veterinary Supervisor - Blood Sampling (OV72) onto the training record by the six month deadline date will result in suspension or expiry of the ABS's authorisation.

26. Authorised ABSs shall be included in the Agency-held definitive list of ABSs. However, at no time shall an ABS be considered an Agency member of staff or an employee of government.

27. All official communication will be via the email address that is registered by the ABS on the training provider and the Agency's databases. It is a condition of the authorisation that this email address is kept up to date and APHA communications monitored by the ABS.

28. Once authorised, the ABS will be required to revalidate the training at the appropriate revalidation cycle to retain their authorisation.

Revalidation

29. ABS authorisation is for a specified time period which will end four years from the initial date of completion of the theory training. The authorisation will only continue beyond that point if the OCQ(AHP) - ABS qualification is successfully revalidated. Thereafter, the authorisation shall last for a period of four years with the same requirement for revalidation.

30. The training provider will notify the ABS of the completion deadline for the revalidation and will send reminders, prior to the expiry date.

31. To revalidate the OCQ(AHP) – ABS qualification, the ABS must successfully complete the online theory revalidation training course and assessment. Their AVS-BS must also certify that the ABS has taken a specified number of blood samples during the four year revalidation interval and confirm continued competence in blood sampling by conducting an audit.

32. The ABS may have their authorisation extended in the following circumstances without a break in their authorisation:
    - if the revalidation is completed within the six months prior to the revalidation deadline date, the start date of the next period of the authorisation shall be the original revalidation deadline date
    - if revalidation takes place prior to that six month period, the start date of the new period of authorisation shall be from the date of the certificate of completion provided by the training provider

33. Agency records shall be updated accordingly.

34. If revalidation is not completed by the revalidation deadline, the ABS's authorisation shall be suspended. If the revalidation is completed within six months of the original revalidation deadline date, the authorisation will be reinstated, and a new deadline date

will be set four years from the date of the certificate of completion provided by the training provider.

35. If the revalidation is not completed within the six month period of suspension, the authorisation will be automatically expired and the ABS will need to complete the full OCQ(AHP) - ABS training, including the practical assessment or apply to the Agency for permission to revalidate outside of the deadline. The Agency retains the right to grant or refuse permission based on the reasons provided for the request.

Performance of tasks

36. ABSs may only carry out blood sampling of cattle (as defined above) in England and Wales. Sampling must be carried out under direct personal supervision whilst conditionally authorised and under general direction once authorised of the AVS-BS or deputy AVS-BS. ABSs are not permitted to blood sample any species other than cattle and they are not permitted to work as an ABS in Scotland. ABSs may only carry out blood sampling for use in diagnosis for the control or eradication by the Ministers of infectious diseases. ABSs are not permitted to carry out blood sampling for any other purpose, for example general diagnostic purposes.

37. The Agency will not supply any materials to the ABS necessary for the performance of the ABS role. There may be exceptions to this where some equipment may be provided, and the Agency will provide clarification of exactly what will be provided in these circumstances.

38. In accordance with ABS instructions and training, ABSs must maintain a high standard of hygiene and biosecurity when visiting premises in the exercise of their function such as the wearing of suitable protective clothing and the correct use of approved disinfectant, as appropriate to the situation and as directed by their AVS-BS.

Assessment and quality assurance

39. The Agency will monitor ABS performance as it sees fit through a range of checks and inspection activities including, but not limited to:
    - analysis of data
    - investigation of complaints, in particular from recipients of tasks undertaken by an authorised official
    - reports from the AVS-BS or deputy AVS-BS, who are required to monitor the delivery of the ABS function
    - audit inspections, including unannounced audits
    - other intelligence

40. ABSs must provide documentation upon request of the Agency to assist with quality assurance checks and investigation of complaints.

41. The Agency will carry out ad hoc analysis of ABSs' work such as looking at ABS performance. This may be as a result of referrals or intelligence that standards are not being met such as sample submission paperwork or performance issues.

42. The appropriate Senior Veterinary Managers in England or Wales will review this information and may apply local knowledge if appropriate to decide whether an individual ABS or a practice needs to be approached for further action.

Acting in an official capacity

43. ABSs should be aware that they are acting in an official capacity when carrying out their official tasks and should be appropriately trained in the area of official controls relevant to their authorised tasks. They must be capable of responding to queries related to the performance of their function while operating in the field.

44. To enable and maintain the effective performance of their role, all ABSs will have access to an online portal through which instructions and the ABS training qualification material will be made available. These reflect the requirements of relevant legislation and government policy. Additions and amendments shall be issued periodically, and it is essential that all ABSs refer to the current instructions. It is the ABS's responsibility to be up to date with all aspects relevant to the ABS authorisation that apply to them. As such, ABSs are expected to monitor the registered email address which they supplied to the training contractor and the Agency and to update their records with any changes.

45. ABSs maintain responsibility for the security of all information obtained during the execution of their duties whether documentary, oral or pictorial, digital or printed. All such data is considered personal and commercially sensitive data and may not be disclosed unless authorised under applicable sections of the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR). The unlawful disclosure of protected data shall be grounds for suspension or revocation of authorisation.

46. ABSs must abide by the standards set out in the ABS training qualification and act without conflict of interest. They must follow the guidance on certification as this underpins official activities.

47. ABSs must ensure that all their official activities are covered by professional indemnity insurance or equivalent arrangements.

Suspension and revocation of authorisation

48. The Authority may suspend or revoke the authorisation of any ABS who:
    - is convicted of an offence that in the opinion of the Agency would render them unfit to carry out their duties
    - has been authorised for four years or more but who has not, during every four year period following first authorisation, taken the minimum number of blood samples required for revalidation
    - breaches any condition of the authorisation
    - is, in the opinion of the Authority for any other reason no longer a fit and proper person to blood sample cattle on behalf of Ministers or
    - there is reasonable suspicion that the ABS has acted in a way that makes precautionary suspension desirable

49. If an AVS-BS relinquishes their position as supervisor for an ABS, the ABS must nominate a new AVS-BS and ensure that their training record has an accurate record of their current AVS-BS and deputy. If a new AVS-BS cannot be appointed, the ABS must notify the Agency, and authorisation will be suspended pending the appointment of a new AVS-BS.

50. If an ABS fails to complete the revalidation of the qualification by the deadline, the authorisation shall be suspended for a period of six months. If the revalidation is not completed within the six-month period, the authorisation shall be revoked.

51. The ABS may request their authorisation be revoked or suspended, giving one week's notice in writing to the Agency.

52. The Veterinary Director, the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs or a senior person (not below Grade 6) so appointed by the Veterinary Director, upon receipt of a written report, can immediately suspend or revoke the ABS's authorisation as a precautionary measure pending investigation in the circumstances described in paragraph 45.

53. In exceptional cases, rather than suspend the authorisation for the reasons given in paragraph 45 above, the Agency may decide to allow the OV to continue with their authorisation but stipulate they must only carry out the role under the direct personal supervision of a named supervisor whilst the investigation is in progress.

54. When an ABS's authorisation is suspended or conditions are applied as in paragraph 50 above, a Senior Veterinary Manager will be appointed to carry out and complete an investigation without unreasonable delay.

55. In the event of precautionary suspension, a letter of suspension will be sent to the ABS concerned and their AVS-BS will be sent a copy. The letter will either be sent by email or by recorded delivery. The letter will set out the grounds for the suspension and a date of commencement of the suspension.

56. The letter will also remind the ABS to stop all activities related to being an ABS for the relevant tasks. Copies of all documents will be sent to the APHA OV Team and Regulatory Affairs, Compliance and Enforcement (RACE) Team.

57. Where the Agency has cause for concern over the conduct of an ABS but does not believe that there are grounds for suspension during the investigation, the ABS may continue to carry out official tasks during the investigation.

58. The authorisation of an ABS may also be suspended or revoked subject to the final decision of a review panel or appeal outcome of any investigation where the panel considers that:

- the ABS may not be competent or may not perform their tasks to the required standards
- the ABS has infringed or failed to comply with the conditions of authorisation
- the ABS is guilty of conduct which makes suspension of the authorisation desirable in the Agency's interest or in the public interest

59. Suspension of authorisation following a review panel decision will usually be for a set period of time and reinstatement may be subject to other conditions being met.

60. It is the responsibility of the ABS to inform their employer and where applicable, the Veterinary Delivery Partner (VDP), if they are unable to carry out their duties due to suspension of their authorisation. APHA will not inform the employer or VDP of the suspension. The AVS-BS will be notified.

61. The Agency may, before reinstating an authorisation that has been suspended or revoked under paragraph 45, require a person whose authorisation has been suspended or revoked to satisfy additional conditions.

62. An individual whose authorisation is suspended shall not hold themselves out as being an ABS nor can they perform any blood sampling of cattle on behalf of the Agency or operate in a way which might infer they are able to do so.

Investigation

63. Investigations pursuant to any allegation or circumstance outlined in paragraph 45 shall be conducted in accordance with the following:
    - a sole investigator, who is a permanent employee of the Agency of Grade 6 or Grade 7 and a Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (MRCVS), will be appointed to carry out and complete an investigation without unreasonable delay
    - the Agency shall notify the ABS in writing of the terms of the allegations. Such notification shall be sent to the ABS's registered email address or practice address. A written account may be requested from the ABS
    - the investigator will usually arrange to interview the ABS as part of the investigation to enable them to present further evidence and explanation. However, in some cases the investigator may decide that this is not necessary. For example, in cases where the investigation concludes without doubt that the allegations cannot be upheld
    - the ABS shall be given a minimum of 5 working days' notice of the interview, which will usually be undertaken remotely using APHA security compliant options, or may be undertaken face to face
    - interviews will be recorded, and the recording will be retained for two years from either the date that the investigation outcome letter is sent to the ABS, or the outcome of an appeal letter is sent to the ABS, whichever is the latter
    - recordings will be made available to the ABS on request. Transcripts of the recordings will be retained for 10 years from the same start points
    - if the ABS wishes, they may be accompanied by one person at any interview at their own expense. The ABS must notify the investigator of the attendance and details of their companion no later than 72 hours before the appointed date of the interview
    - the ABS may consult with their companion during the meeting. The companion does not have the right to answer questions on the ABS's behalf, address the meeting if the ABS does not wish it, or prevent the investigator from explaining the case
    - the Agency will treat all reports and other documents as confidential except that they may be shared with any other statutory body with a legitimate interest where such disclosure is authorised under relevant GDPR or other legislation or if criminal intent is evident

64. Where an ABS carries out blood sampling as part of the VDP, a VDP may conduct their own investigation, either independently or as requested by APHA. The APHA investigator will use any report from such an investigation as part of the evidence and conduct any further investigations they deem necessary before providing a final report to the review panel.

65. In cases where there is evidence of non-compliance with instructions or with the standards in this policy or of alleged misconduct, a senior Agency Veterinary Surgeon (not below Grade 6), can suspend the ABS's authorisation as a precautionary measure before the investigation is complete, or require the ABS to be under the direct personal supervision of a named supervisor until the review panel has come to its decision. In such cases, the investigation and review will be conducted without unreasonable delay on the part of the Agency.

66. If, at any point, the investigator uncovers further issues that fall outside of the allegations stated in the letter of notification or any updates thereof, consideration will be given as to whether additional allegations must be added. If so, the ABS will be notified of the new allegations in writing as soon as possible.

67. The investigator may interview such parties as they consider fit and shall make every attempt to interview any persons suggested by the ABS and considered to be relevant to the allegations made. Should the investigator fail to interview parties suggested by the ABS, they shall account for such failure in any report produced.

68. The Agency shall notify the AVS-BS in writing of the terms of the allegations and if appropriate, the investigator shall request a relevant account in writing or in person as the case may be.

69. The ABS shall co-operate with any reasonable request to assist the investigation, including the production of documents or attendance at an interview. Failure to comply with all such reasonable requests shall be included in the final report and may be considered as grounds for suspension or revocation of authorisation.

70. The ABS will be given a draft of the investigator's report which shall be submitted in writing to their registered email address or practice address with an invitation to review the document and to correct any factual errors or to make any relevant comments. The ABS will have 14 days to do this and will be expected to respond by email to the person appointed to receive such communication. The Agency may grant extra time to the ABS to review the report if there is reasonable justification, provided that request is received in writing before the expiry of the 14 day period.

71. The investigator may decide that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the alleged misconduct and recommend to the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs or other Senior Veterinary Manager that the case is closed. If the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs or Senior Veterinary Manager agrees, either they or the investigator will write to the ABS informing them of this.

72. The final report shall be forwarded to the review panel other than where the case is closed during the investigation stage as at paragraph 68 above.

Decisions of the review panel

73. A review panel will be appointed by the Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs or delegated Senior Veterinary Manager comprising two members, at least one of whom shall be an Agency MRCVS of Grade 6 and the other an official permanently employed by the Agency at a suitable level of seniority (Grade SEO or above). The investigator will not be a member of the review panel.

74. A member of the review panel will invite the ABS to a review panel meeting, which will usually be carried out remotely but may be carried out face to face. The ABS will be given at least five working days' notice of the date of the meeting. The ABS will be invited to make representations and given the opportunity to present any relevant mitigating factors. No expenses will be payable to the ABS for attendance at this meeting.

75. The ABS may be accompanied by one person of their choice at the review panel meeting but the cost of their companion attending the meeting will be at their expense. The ABS must notify the member of the review panel who invited them to the meeting, that they will be accompanied, providing details of the companion, no later than 72 hours before the appointed date of the meeting.

76. The review panel shall consider the investigator's report as well as any representations made by the ABS when making their deliberations.

77. The review panel may decide on any one or more of the following outcomes in proportion to their findings:
    - no further action is required
    - reinstatement of authorisation if suspended
    - written advice given to the ABS
    - requirement for an improvement/action plan to be provided by the ABS
    - retraining at the ABS's expense
    - suspension (or continued suspension) of authorisation with respect to OCQ authorisation,
    - revocation of authorisation or refusal to authorise on the OCQ(AHP) - ABS for a maximum period of five years. An ABS may apply for reinstatement during the period of revocation at intervals of no less than 12 months
    - referral to a relevant professional regulatory body (e.g. to the RCVS if the ABS is also a veterinary nurse), where there are grounds for concerns as to professional conduct
    - additional conditions such as working under the direct personal supervision of the AVS-BS for a specified period of time
    - referral to Defra, a Local Authority or to the police for investigation if there is evidence that a criminal offence may have been committed
    - any other action that the Agency considers necessary

78. In making their decision, the review panel will consider performance and conduct as well as the facts of the specific case. Any records from the previous 10 years will be reviewed, including the outcomes of any RCVS investigations. Professional misconduct, intentional or repeated non-compliance with ABS procedures would justify a long period of suspension or revocation of authorisation.

79. If the review panel finds that it is necessary to suspend the authorisation of an ABS and there has been a similar incident within the previous five years, then the ABS's authorisation will normally be revoked for five years from the date of the decision.

80. The review panel will normally make a decision and report the findings and decision to the ABS in a letter sent to their registered email address or by recorded delivery to their practice address within five working days of the review panel meeting.

81. Copies of all the review panel documents will be sent to the APHA OV Team, Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs, Veterinary Director and the Regulatory Affairs, Compliance and Enforcement (RACE) Team.

82. A copy of the letter detailing the decision will also be sent to the investigator of the case and the regional Senior Veterinary Lead (Grade 6 or above) in the region in which the ABS is registered as working. This will only be sent once the period of appeal has passed and no appeal has been raised. If an appeal is raised, they will not be notified until the appeal has been decided.

83. An APHA Governance Board will review all cases at least annually.

84. Where the ABS has been referred to the RCVS as a cause for concern, copies of the documents produced throughout the investigation along with any other relevant material will be shared with the RCVS.

85. In the event that authorisation is suspended or revoked, and the allegation raises concerns over the validity of the OCQ(AHP) - ABS qualification, then the training provider will be notified so that they can consider the status of the qualification that the ABS has obtained.

86. In the event that any blood sample is deemed to be invalid at any point during the investigation and that sampling was instructed by APHA to a VDP, APHA will notify the VDP that the test is invalid.

87. It is the responsibility of the ABS to inform their employer and where applicable, the VDP, if they are unable to carry out their duties either during or following the outcome of the investigation.

88. APHA will not inform the employer or VDP of the outcome of the case but may require actions to be carried out by the VDP as part of the review panel's decision. The AVS-BS will be notified.

Appeals

89. Appeals are permitted on the following grounds:
    - if procedural errors are suspected
    - if new information or evidence is presented that may change the outcome of the original decision

90. Appeals of the final decision of the review panel shall be conducted as follows:

- the appeal must be in writing and addressed to the Agency Veterinary Director and sent by either email or by letter to the following address:

  APHA Corporate Correspondence@apha.gov.uk

  Corporate Correspondence
  APHA Weybridge
  Woodham Lane
  New Haw
  Addlestone
  Surrey
  KT15 3NB

- it must be received within 28 days of the date of the review panel's written communication detailing their findings and the outcome
- it must set out the grounds of appeal

91. The Veterinary Director may within 28 days decide the appeal or on receipt of the appeal immediately appoint a senior person (not below Grade 6) who has not previously been involved in the case to decide the appeal on their behalf. The appointed person will have 28 days to decide the appeal.

92. If the ABS's authorisation has been suspended or revoked, then this will continue during the 28 day period allowed for lodging an appeal and while the appeal is being considered.

93. The decision of the Veterinary Director, or the person appointed by them, is final.

Restoration of authorisation

94. If authorisation as an ABS has been lost due to the expiry of an OCQ(AHP) - ABS which has not been revalidated on time as outlined in section 'Revalidation' then retraining will be required as outlined in section 'Revalidation'. Only after successful completion of retraining shall the ABS be re-authorised. The ABS can apply to the Agency for permission to revalidate outside of the deadline. The Agency retains the right to grant or refuse permission based on the reasons provided for the request.

95. If authorisation was suspended during an investigation and the outcome of the investigation was favourable to the ABS, then authorisation will be restored to the extent that their OCQ(AHP) - ABS certificate is still valid. For the avoidance of doubt there will be no extension of the authorisation period.

Using and sharing your information

How we use your personal data is set out in our personal information charter and privacy notices:

- https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/about/personal-information-charter
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/animal-and-plant-heath-agency-privacy-notices

APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.