Animal and Plant Health Agency

OV73 Blood sampling audit: minimum requirements

July 2025

Contents

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Overview

1. The following audit checklist represents the minimum standard of audit that must be delivered for all Approved Blood Samplers carrying out blood sampling, regardless of who is carrying out the audit.

2. The nature of the non-compliances that may be encountered are indicated and rated according to severity. The categories are based on the potential impact the non-compliance could have, not on the actual impact on the blood sampling being carried out. Any non-compliance that falls into the ‘critical’ category could potentially affect the validity of the blood sampling. The category of non-compliance will inform the decision regarding the nature and severity of the sanctions to be applied (see Part 2 below).

3. Prior to conducting an audit, the auditor must confirm that the person to be audited holds the correct authorisation to blood sample under the Official Controls Qualification (Animal Health Paraprofessional) - Approved Blood Sampler (OCQ(AHP) - ABS).

Part 1

Key

Assessment area	Category of non-compliance				
	Satisfactory	NOT SATISFACTORY → UNACCEPTABLE			
		Minor	**Intermediate**	**Major**	**Critical**
Biosecurity					
1. Protective clothing	All protective clothing must cover any normal clothing completely, be clean on arrival, suitable for cleansing and disinfection (C&D), or can be removed and sealed in a bag prior to leaving the premises. e.g. Wellington boots plus protective layer which is removed before leaving the farm. Brown coats/paper overalls which are removed and bagged before leaving the farm.	Clean but incomplete protective outer layer and no spares available. Waterproof Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) items significantly perished or damaged so that clothing underneath is exposed.		Soiled or no protective clothing prior to start of blood sampling. Failure to agree to C&D or about to start blood sampling without having completed C&D.	

2. Cleansing and disinfection (C&D) of PPE	C&D completed before and after blood sampling. Use of a Defra approved disinfectant at the correct dilution rate.	Disinfectant dilution rate is incorrect, or disinfectant is not accurately measured. A part of C&D, equipment is missing but procedure still carried out effectively.	Poor C&D technique. C&D not completed before blood sampling (unless clean/new kit then reduce to minor). Significantly incomplete C&D equipment resulting in ineffective C&D.	No C&D of PPE after blood sampling or both before and after sampling. No disinfectant or use of a non-approved disinfectant.	
3. Vehicle cleanliness	Vehicle clean on arrival other than any dirt that would reasonably be expected to accumulate on the journey to the farm.		Vehicle dirty on the outside and visibly contaminated with manure/slurry but vehicle not taken into animal area.	Vehicle dirty on the outside and visibly contaminated with manure/slurry and vehicle taken into animal area. Vehicle contaminated with faeces inside and out, irrespective of where parked on the premises.	
Equipment					
4. Blood sampling equipment	Correct blood sampling equipment used for the size and type of animal Needle holders or needles and syringes			Attempting to blood sample with incorrect, non-functional or incomplete equipment.	

	Vacutainers				
Animal identification					
5. Animal identification	Correct identification of each animal by the official ear tag. If temporary ID required, unique marker given.	An unintentional reading error which is suitably rectified and would not affect correct assignment of a blood sample to an individual animal.	Failure to use a suitable unique marker if no official ear tag is present.	Repeated reading errors. Any errors which may affect correct assignment of blood samples to individual animals.	**Not all official ear tags/identities read.**
6. Recording of animal IDs	Identity of each animal correctly recorded. If no official ear tag present, other unique identifier recorded.	An unintentional recording error which is suitably rectified and would not affect correct assignment of a blood sample to an individual animal.	Failure to record a suitable unique marker if no official ear tag is present.	Repeated recording errors. Any errors which may affect correct assignment of blood samples to individual animals.	**Not all official ear tags/identities recorded.**

Blood sampling technique					
7. Cattle handling	Cattle handled in a safe, appropriate and welfare-friendly manner.			Cattle handling compromises safety and/or animal welfare.	
8. Blood sampling technique	Correct blood sampling technique used for the size and type of animal.	Minor error in blood sampling technique which does not compromise safety, animal welfare or sample viability.		Incorrect blood sampling technique which compromises safety, animal welfare or sample viability.	
9. Sample viability	Viable blood sample collected from each animal.		Blood sample collected from one or more animals may not be viable, for example borderline insufficient sample volume, evidence of clotted or haemolysed sample for tubes with anticoagulant		Blood sample collected from one or more animals that is not viable and would likely prevent the laboratory from testing the sample and require resampling of the animal(s).

Forms and sample packaging					
10. Sample submission form	Each blood sample is correctly reconciled with the animal's official identity on the sample submission form to ensure that each sample is recorded against the animal from which it was collected.	An unintentional reconciliation error which is suitably rectified and would not affect correct assignment of a blood sample to an individual animal.		Repeated reconciliation errors. Any errors which may affect correct assignment of blood samples to individual animals.	**No attempt to reconcile the sample with the correct animal.**
11. Sample packaging	Blood samples packaged correctly in compliance with ADR (Dangerous carriage of goods regulations).		Blood samples packaged incorrectly e.g. incorrect packaging used, incomplete labelling	Blood sample packaging not in compliance with ADR. Contamination of the outside of the packaging with blood, faeces or other material that may be a disease risk to other animals or humans.	
Additional tasks					

12. Keeper	Clearly communicate next steps to the animal keeper.	Communicate next steps with minor inaccuracies and/or omissions.	Communicate next steps with major inaccuracies and/or omissions.	Failed to communicate next steps.	

Findings at the audit that may invalidate the blood samples

1. In such cases, no payment will be made for the blood sampling
2. Reasonable efforts will be made to salvage the sampling by, for example, calling on a competent person to blood sample the cattle
3. APHA will clearly establish whether the validity of the blood test relates to actions or inaction of the ABS blood sampling on the day, or from matters outside the ABS's control when making the assessment of performance.
4. This would be the case if official identities had not been recorded, samples could not be reconciled correctly against each animal, or blood sample viability is compromised such that the samples are unsuitable to send to the laboratory for testing.
5. It should be noted that the liability for ABS negligence falls with the ABS and not APHA.

Part 2

1. Sanctions for non-compliances with blood sampling requirements will be proportionate to the severity of the non-compliances or their multitude, considering possible rectification **in situ** and/or mitigating factors. They will be assessed on a case by case basis.

2. If the auditor observes practice that would affect the validity of the blood test, they must take immediate action, not allowing sampling to continue. Consideration must also be given to requiring re-sampling of unsatisfactorily sampled animals to avoid declaring a blood sampling event void and whether payment for the sampling should be withheld.

3. Depending on the nature of the non-compliances the action taken may include the following as listed below:

    - advice (verbal)
    - correction at the time
    - putting animals back through the crush
    - advice (written)
    - re-training
    - non-payment for sampling
    - suspension or revocation of OCQ(AHP) - ABS
    - request improvement plan
    - interview with Delivery Partner (DP) Senior OV
    - refer for investigation by APHA
    - refer to APHA for consideration of suspension from one or more OCQs

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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.