



# News from your APHA OV Team Issue 1

July 2023

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Welcome to the team's first OV Newsletter. We hope you will find the edition informative and useful. If you have any questions about the content of this edition, then please contact the OV team either via telephone or email and we'll be happy to help you.



The OV team sits within the Veterinary Directorate of APHA and is responsible for administering the regulation of Official Veterinarians (OVs), Animal Health Paraprofessionals (AHPs) and Food Competent Certifying Officers (FCCOs) across England, Scotland and Wales. We work closely with internal and external partners to deliver a comprehensive training and authorisation service for OVs, AHPs and FCCOs.

Email [CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk](mailto:CSCOneHealthOVTeam@apha.gov.uk)

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

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## What keeps us busy

Our customer base is circa 11,000 Official Veterinarians, 230 Approved Tuberculin Testers, 830 Certification Support Officers & 1000 Food Competent Certifying Officers. \*

We respond to email and telephone queries on training and authorisation from all these groups.

We grant OV, AHP and FCCO authorisations and issue official stamps.

We also process extension and exception requests to the training and authorisation requirements.

We manage reports of alleged non-compliance with the Policy of Authorisation requirements by individual OVs/AHPs/FCCOs.

\* Latest figures can be found here OV - [Official Veterinarian Training \(improve-ov.com\)](#); AHP/FCCO - [Official Animal Health Paraprofessional Training \(improve-ahp.com\)](#)

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## 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 community.

### Training and Authorisation

- All OVs must be familiar with the ([OV13](#)), which is the Policy for Authorisation of Official Veterinarians (OVs) in Great Britain. Please remind yourselves of the content on a regular basis.
- All ATTs and their Approved Veterinary Supervisors (AVSs) and deputies must be familiar with the [TR541](#), which is the Policy for APHA Authorisation of Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) in England and Wales . Please remind yourselves of the content on a regular basis and discuss with your ATTs.
- A reminder to apply for **OV authorisation** on the Improve database if you want to complete OV work using your OCQ(V) qualification. To request authorisation you must tick the box as shown below, which is located via

your personal dashboard in the training details section. As well as ticking the box, you will also need to click 'Update':

**OV Authorisation:** [click here >](#)

If you intend to apply for OV authorisation to work on behalf of APHA after completing this OCQ(V), please ensure this box is checked and click update. [Update >](#)

Please note that if you do not check this box now you can return to do so at any time, if you subsequently require the authorisation.

You must not carry out OV work until you have confirmation of authorisation from APHA.

Please also remind colleagues who are seeking to become OVs.

- Supervisors must ensure that new TT OVs and ATTs do not commence TB testing until they have received confirmation of conditional authorisation from APHA. Once they have successfully completed the practical assessment, ATTs must continue to test under the direct supervision of their AVS/deputy until confirmation of full authorisation is received.
- If you are unable to meet a training deadline and require an extension to the deadline or an exception to the requirements, please complete a [TR588](#) form and send to the OV team for consideration before your authorisation is suspended or expired. *Please note that extensions and exceptions should only be requested in limited circumstances, the details of which can be found on the TR588 form. Most extensions granted are for low volume TB testers in Scotland and the Low Risk Areas in England.*

## Biosecurity

- As all veterinary surgeons will be aware, high biosecurity standards are paramount in our combined efforts to control disease. Failure to implement correct biosecurity measures on arrival and departure from a livestock premises for example, poses a significant disease risk.
- APHA has set biosecurity requirements and these standards must be met as a minimum when attending a premises to carry out OV work.
- If a premises has additional biosecurity requirements, these must also be followed unless they compromise the APHA standards.
- Details of APHA biosecurity requirements for livestock premises can be found within the OCQ training courses, most notably the Essential Skills (ES) course. There is a biosecurity section within the ES revalidation section which can be found in the majority of the OCQ revalidation courses. For those carrying out Notifiable Disease Outbreak work, there

is more detail in the (Notifiable Disease Outbreak Training (NDOT) course.

**Please review this biosecurity information and help us demonstrate and maintain high standards.**

## TB specific information:

- A reminder to **Approved Veterinary Supervisors (AVSs)** that once an ATT is fully authorised, the AVS must continue to provide supervision even though continual direct supervision is no longer required. The AVS must maintain oversight of the ATT's work and be available as required to provide advice and support. The requirements of the AVS role can be found in the TR540 document here [The Approved Veterinary Supervisor Role \(defra.gov.uk\)](https://www.defra.gov.uk) – point 9 highlights situations where the AVS is required to provide additional support. AVS's must ensure that their ATT's are familiar with the content of this document and know when they need to contact their AVS.
- Please remember that ATTs are only authorised under the TR541 to carry out TB skin testing of **cattle** and only in England and Wales. ATTs must not conduct testing of other species or test at premises fully or partially in Scotland.
- OVs are reminded that **if a test cannot be carried out safely, it must be stopped** and where possible, a solution found. For ATTs, if the situation cannot be rectified, the AVS must be consulted for further advice. Failure to carry out the test according to the SOP is not acceptable in any circumstances and may result in the test not being valid. AVSs must ensure that their ATTs are aware of how to handle Health and Safety concerns.

If you are **interested in becoming a TB assessor** for the OCQ(V) – TT practical assessments in Scotland, please contact Improve International (via 0330 202 0380 / [enquiries@improve-ov.com](mailto:enquiries@improve-ov.com)) to discuss further.

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## When things go wrong

We know that most OVs carry out their OV work to very high standards and make every effort to ensure they comply with requirements. Mistakes happen – we are all human. If you make a mistake, tell us about it and we will work with you to help you resolve it.

Sometimes we are alerted to allegations of non-compliance of a more serious nature and we will follow up on all of these. Notification can come from Quality

Assurance (QA) findings, complaints from farmers, vets and trading partners for example. Most cases are resolved without the need for formal investigation.

However, some cases do progress to formal investigation and the process for this is detailed in the [OV13](#) Policy document. Formal investigation is just that – an investigation – and is required where we need to ascertain more information to determine whether, why and how a non-compliance occurred. It doesn't assume that the person under investigation is guilty of any misconduct – the investigation may well prove otherwise.

In some circumstances where it is considered there is a high risk to the ongoing delivery of the individual's OV work, the OV's authorisation in one or more of their work areas will be suspended as a precautionary measure pending the outcome of the investigation.

A sole investigator is appointed to collect the evidence and a two-person review panel will decide upon the outcome of the case. Where there are concerns regarding veterinary professional conduct, the matter will be referred to the RCVS, usually after the investigation is complete.

The time taken to complete an investigation is variable, dependent upon several factors including the complexity of the case, the availability and number of individuals (including witnesses) for interview. It must take as long as is required to ensure a thorough and fair investigation.

In 2022, 9 formal investigation cases were triggered - 6 OVs & 3 ATTs. ATT data is also included below for the information of supervisors.

<b>Table 1 – Details of the formal investigations carried out in 2022</b>		
1. Number of cases progressed to formal investigation		<b>9</b>
Personnel:		
Number of OVs formally investigated		<b>6</b>
Number of ATTs formally investigated		<b>3</b>
Number of CSOs formally investigated		<b>0</b>
Number of FCCOs formally investigated		<b>0</b>
2. Nature of allegations that led to formal investigation:		
TB Testing (TT) related	OV	<b>1</b>

	ATT	<b>3</b>
Exports (EX) related	OV	<b>2</b>
Notifiable Disease Outbreak related	OV	<b>3</b>
Other	OV/ATT	<b>0</b>
3. Precautionary measures implemented pending outcome of the investigation:		
a) Authorisation suspended	OV	<b>4</b>
	ATT	<b>1</b>
b) Authorisation conditions amended	ATT	<b>1</b> – had to work under direct supervision of OV
c) None. Individual able to continue in role during the investigation	OV	<b>2</b>
	ATT	<b>1</b>
4. <b>ATT</b> Review Panel outcome summary (more than one outcome may apply per case).		
Authorisation revoked		<b>1</b>
Improvement Plan		<b>2</b>
Revalidation		<b>1</b>
Re-reading of rules/procedures		<b>2</b>
Enhanced QA measures (all however are targeted for future audit)		<b>1</b>
Testing restrictions (testing under supervision for a specified period)		<b>1</b>

5. <b>OV</b> Review Panel Outcome Summary (more than one outcome may apply per case).		
Authorisation revoked		<b>3</b>
Authorisation suspended		<b>1</b>
Written advice provided		<b>2</b>
Biosecurity checklist required		<b>1</b>
Improvement Plan		<b>2</b>
Revalidation/on-line training		<b>2</b>
No action		<b>1</b>
6. Referral to RCVS	OV	<b>3</b>
7. Time taken per case - from the issuing of the OV46 (notification of investigation letter) to the issuing of the OV50 (review panel outcome letter). Note : this is for cases triggered in 2022 only (total 9 cases).		
Average (months)		<b>3</b>
Range (months)		<b>1 - 8</b>

The following are examples of allegation types :

- Failure to identify animals prior to certification
- Incorrect declarations in relation to Avian Influenza status
- Inappropriate use of remote certification
- Failure to measure skin on day 1 of a TB test
- Failure to carry out appropriate biosecurity protocols on arrival at premises
- Retest of a reactor without permission
- Failure to conduct visits as certified

Please put this into context:

At the end of 2022 there were 11,339 OVs and only 6 formal OV investigations triggered that year. There were 183 ATTs and 3 formal ATT investigations. Several other cases were raised (for example during Nov and Dec 2022 there

were 14 OV cases and 1 ATT case raised) that did not progress to formal investigation.

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## Thank you

A personal thankyou from Sue Quinney, our Veterinary Head of OV Regulatory Affairs :

Thank you to all OVs who continue to provide such an excellent service. 2022 was again a challenging year, largely due to the scale of the Avian Influenza outbreak but also due to the Ukrainian situation and the ongoing demands for Export Health Certification following EU exit. Delivery of this work and to the required standards relies on you, our OVs. The response to urgent situations has been remarkable. High volumes and standards of work have been delivered in all OV work areas.

As a result, APHA has been able to provide assurances, including to international trading partners, that OVs can and do deliver this crucial work to high standards.

I am keen to continue to work together with you to further improve our processes of OV regulation. Please continue to provide feedback and suggestions through the OV team. I hope to 'see' some of you at the 2023 OV conference where I will be covering a session on OV regulation.

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## OV Conference Online - 19 - 21 September 2023

Once again Improve International are hosting an OV Conference, in association with APHA. This will be an online event and attendees can claim up to 18 CPD hours. The Conference is open to all OVs, AHPs and students. You can access the Conference website using the following link: <https://officialvet.com/>. Here you can find the programme.

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## APHA Vet Gateway

The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) [Vet Gateway](#) provides a portal for vets to access APHA's services, systems, operating instructions, guidance,

news, [OV](#) and [ATT](#) Briefing Notes and intelligence on new and re-emerging animal health threats.

It supports vets working as [Official Veterinarians](#) and using APHA's veterinary [scanning surveillance and diagnostic support network](#).

**AHPs and FCCOs have their own sections. The ATT section can be found here <http://apha.defra.gov.uk/ahp/index.htm>.**

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## 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](mailto: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](mailto:petexports@apha.gov.uk)

### **Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) Queries:**

In England, tel. 03000 200 301 or [TB.Advice@apha.gov.uk](mailto:TB.Advice@apha.gov.uk)

In Wales, tel. 0300 303 8268 or [apha.cymruwales@apha.gov.uk](mailto: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](mailto:enquiries@improve-ov.com)

### **Opening hours**

08:30-17:30

[www.improve-ov.com](http://www.improve-ov.com)

[www.improve-ahp.com](http://www.improve-ahp.com)

**EHC Online:**

[How to register for export health certificate \(EHC\) online - GOV.UK  
\(www.gov.uk\)](http://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](mailto:aphaservicedesk@apha.gov.uk)

**‘Find a professional to certify Export Health Certificates’:**

Requests to be listed on the following page on Gov.UK:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/find-a-professional-to-certify-export-health-certificates> should be sent to the OV team.

Please note that that is optional and quite separate from the EHC Online system.

**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

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You can also get social with us:



Please contact the [APHA.CorporateCommunications@apha.gov.uk](mailto:APHA.CorporateCommunications@apha.gov.uk) mailbox if you no longer wish to receive these email notifications

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.