

OFFICIAL VETERINARIAN

THE NEWSLETTER FROM ANIMAL HEALTH FOR OFFICIAL VETERINARIAN PRACTICES

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Bluetongue 2-6

- Vaccination progress
- Disease situation and risks
- Vaccines
- Movement restrictions
- Risks during TB testing
- PCR test
- Scottish control strategy

News in brief 7-8

TB 9-11

- One Wales Health Check
- Review of TB test procedures
- Anergic cow
- Testing guidance

Working

as an OV 12-13

- Health and safety at work
- Fees review
- Changing practice and appointments

Around the Divisions 14-15

And finally 16

- Pet passports
- Useful contacts

DEFRA: INVESTMENT IN VACCINES TO FIGHT BOVINE TB

A £20 million investment into vaccines to tackle bovine TB was announced by Defra in July, along with a decision that licences will not be issued to allow badger culling.

The decision was based on a wide range of evidence, including discussions with farming, veterinary, wildlife and conservation groups, the conclusions of the Independent Scientific Group on Cattle TB (ISG), and the EFRA Select Committee Report.

The Secretary of State concluded that insufficient evidence existed to determine whether a badger cull would be effective in controlling the disease. Whilst a cull may be effective, it could end up making the disease worse if it was not sustained over time or delivered effectively, and public opposition,

including the unwillingness of some landowners to take part, would render this more difficult.

Instead efforts will be concentrated on strengthening Defra's research programme to develop cattle and badger vaccines and maintaining cattle controls.

Investment into vaccine development over the last 10 years of more than £18 million has provided evidence that vaccinating young calves is effective. It has also made progress towards developing a test to differentiate infected from vaccinated cattle, has shown that injectable BCG can protect badgers, and has made progress in developing oral badger vaccine baits. This work will be enhanced by the new investment.

One Wales TB eradication programme

The One Wales programme includes a commitment to pursue a programme of TB eradication in Wales, backed by an additional £27m over three years.

The programme recognises the growing cost of the disease to taxpayers and the dairy and beef industry, with incidence of the disease continuing to increase. It concludes that the current disease control measures are unsustainable given the disease situation in Wales.

Acknowledging that there is no single solution to eradicating bovine TB, the programme will implement a multi-themed approach which recognises that successful

eradication cannot be the responsibility of the government alone – the role of the farming industry and the veterinary profession will be crucial. Only through working in partnership over a sustained period will we have an impact on reducing the incidence of the disease.

The main measures included are:

• Cattle surveillance and controls.

To establish an additional one-off test of all cattle herds across Wales in order to identify the extent of the infection and to remove diseased animals (see page 9)

• Change compensation regime.

Reform to the compensation regime to

Continued on page 9

BLUETONGUE

CONFIRMATION OF BLUETONGUE SEROTYPE 6 IN NETHERLANDS

The European Commission confirmed the first case of bluetongue virus (BTV) serotype 6 in the Netherlands on 24 October 2008. Laboratory tests confirmed the presence of the virus in three animals in the eastern part of the country.

All exports from Netherlands to other Member States were banned on 20th October as a precaution while these cases were being investigated (pending

declaration of any zones by the Dutch authorities)

This serotype has not been reported in the EU before and is not known to be present in Europe or in surrounding areas. Post-import tests on all consignments of susceptible animals from continental Europe, for all Bluetongue serotypes continue, meaning that all serotypes should be detected through routine testing.



Bluetongue movement restrictions

The General Licences for movements of susceptible livestock out of the PZ can be found at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/bluetongue/movements/index.htm

Movement guidance

The movement of ruminant animals, including camelids, out of the protection is permitted under certain conditions. Movements from the Protection Zone to another part of the same Restricted Zone in the EU is permitted without a Bluetongue licence, however export rules still apply.

Cattle and sheep

Cattle and sheep can be exported as long as they can comply with the conditions in general licence EXD483 and must also be accompanied by any other relevant export certification. If using the vaccination option, vaccine must have been administered by a veterinary surgeon and the move must be accompanied by a veterinary certificate of vaccination as well as the owner declaration and any other required export certification.

Other ruminants

Other ruminants can be exported as long as they can comply with the conditions in general licence EXD484 and must also be accompanied by any other relevant export certification. It must be noted that currently for export purposes (including moves to Northern Ireland) vaccination is not an option for these species in which vaccine is administered off-licence under the cascade system. Flowchart summarising the licensing requirements for movements out of the PZ:

www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/bluetongue/pdf/licences-flowchart-v2.pdf

Specific guidance regarding Bluetongue requirements for intra-community trade can be found on the Defra website at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/int-trde/traces/supportdocs.htm.

As Bluetongue requirements can be subject to change as the disease situation develops it is imperative that the most recent versions of any guidance or licences are checked to ensure that the correct conditions are satisfied. If in any doubt about the conditions to be satisfied to allow a movement or export advice should be sought from the local Animal Health Divisional Office.



BLUETONGUE VACCINATION AND TB TESTING

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICINES DURING TB TESTS

The use of other veterinary medicines - including Bluetongue vaccines - at the time of the tuberculin test is strongly discouraged (unless required for welfare reasons) until the test has been read and confirmed clear at 72 hours.

This is important because the administration of medicines may interfere with the immunological response to the injection of tuberculin resulting in either false negative or false positive results. Additionally administration of medicines could delay the removal of reactors and result in additional expense to both the farmer and the tax-payer.

If you become aware that drugs have been administered to an animal you should indicate this in the remarks section of the TB test chart.

Further guidance on the use of the bluetongue vaccination can be found on the Defra website at:

www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/diseases/notifiable/bluetongue/control/vaccination/vaccination-operational.htm

SCOTTISH BLUETONGUE VACCINATION STRATEGY

On Monday November 3, 2008, the Scottish Government declared the whole of Scotland a bluetongue Protection Zone and free movement of bluetongue-susceptible animals across Great Britain will be permitted.

The date has been set following scientific analysis which established that risk of transmission by midges would be low at this point and that livestock need to be protected by the spring when midges will become active again.

In the first year the Scottish Government is supporting half of the vaccine manufacturer costs, totalling £2.6m. This is subject to European Commission State Aid approval. Industry will meet the remaining costs of the vaccine and the total cost of vaccine administration in this and future years.

Vaccination will be compulsory in cattle and sheep and strongly encouraged in other bluetongue susceptible species.

The initial vaccination window will last until April 30, 2009.

The principles of the Vaccination Campaign were agreed with industry and other stakeholder representatives and the Scottish Government has secured 12 million doses of vaccine for use in Scotland.

The Scottish Vaccination Campaign is compulsory and farmers will generally be allowed to administer the vaccine themselves, except where veterinary administration is specifically required (for example for animals intended for movement out of the Protection Zone).

Until a vaccination campaign is launched by the Scottish Government it remains illegal to obtain or use bluetongue vaccine in Scotland

The Scottish Government have agreed to provide 50% of the costs of the purchase of vaccine, up to a maximum of £3m, for the first year only of a vaccination programme.

VETERINARIAN FEE REVIEW

Animal Health, in association with the British Veterinary Association (BVA), has, following a competitive tendering process, commissioned ADAS UK Ltd to conduct an independent review of the fees currently paid to local veterinary inspectors (LVIs) for work undertaken as Official Veterinarians (OVs) on behalf of the government.

The objective of this review is to generate an evidence base to inform discussion of future fee rates between representatives of the private veterinary profession, Animal Health and Defra. The study will address the following aspects:

- recent developments in the veterinary profession;
- the nature of OV work and related services;
- the current basis of charging;
- the identification of options for a revised charging basis; and
- scope to generate efficiencies.

This study will provide both Government and the profession with valuable information and will help to ensure that future working arrangements are fair and equitable and reflect the needs of all parties.

Practices are urged to co-operate with the consultants if approached to assist them with their investigations. Please note that any information provided to the consultants will be in strictest confidence and will not be attributed unless expressly authorised.

If you have any questions about the study or would like to verify contact details or names of the consultants involved please contact either Gordon Hickman, Animal Health Project Manager (020 7238 5111) or Mathew Peel, BVA Policy Adviser (020 7908 6374).

VACCINATION PROGRESS

England & Wales

The roll-out of the bluetongue serotype 8 (BTV8) vaccination programme has progressed rapidly with 26.5 million doses (as at 1 September '08) of vaccine being made available in the PZ which now encompasses the whole of England and Wales

More progress than expected has been made possible by supplementing the initial order of 22.5 million doses from Intervet with a further 13 million from Merial.

Vaccination of susceptible livestock in all parts of England and Wales is now possible and should be encouraged.

Scotland

The Scottish Government is in the process of ordering up to 12 million doses of vaccine in order to implement a compulsory vaccination programme during the next vector free period (VFP) over the winter of 2008-2009. (See page 6)

Take-up rates

Wholesale figures suggest that take-up of vaccine is variable. In some regions (in particular the original PZ in East, South and South-East England) it is estimated to be as high as 70-80%, but is lower in areas in the North and West more recently brought into the PZ.

Accepting that summer is a busy time for other agricultural activity, and with many animals

away at grazing, there is a reluctance to vaccinate in areas where there is an apparent absence of circulating disease.

This may also be exacerbated by unsubstantiated rumours about adverse side-effects of vaccination.

No significant suspected adverse reaction reports

The reporting of suspected adverse reactions (SARS) does not suggest there are any significant problems with these vaccines. Very few numbers of reports have been received and none is causing serious concern.

The cases reported so far have often been related to other ongoing problems (e.g. abortions related to concurrent infections, for example Bovine Viral Diarrhoea).

The low number of reports must be taken in context with the very high number of doses that have already been administered and it so far appears that the number of SARS is no greater than would normally be expected to be seen with new other products.

Any suspected adverse reactions must be reported to the vaccine manufacturer or directly to the VMD. Report forms and guidance can be found on the VMD website at:

<http://www.vmd.gov.uk/General/Adverse/adverse.htm>

Vaccines

Differences between the Intervet & Merial vaccines

The Intervet vaccine (Bovilis BTV8) is licensed for sheep and cattle aged over one month.

The primary course of vaccination consists of one 1ml dose in sheep and two 1ml doses in cattle given approximately three weeks apart. Full protection is established three weeks after the primary course. Thereafter, re-vaccination will be required two weeks before the period of risk.

The Merial vaccine (BTVPUR AISap 8) has been licensed for sheep (aged over three months) and cattle (aged over 2.5 months). The primary course of vaccination consists of one 1ml dose in sheep and two 1ml doses in cattle given one month apart. Thereafter, re-vaccination will be required two weeks before the period of risk.

At present no data is available on the use of the Intervet and Merial vaccines together. It is therefore recommended that the same vaccine should be used for the primary course of vaccination in individual animals (i.e. the two doses in cattle). However, no problems are anticipated with re-vaccinating animals which have already received a primary course of vaccination with a different vaccine.

Other ruminant species

Vaccine can be used to protect other ruminant species that are considered at risk of infection (e.g. camelids, goats, deer).

In these species, use should be undertaken with care and it is advisable to test the vaccine on a small number of animals prior to mass vaccination.

The level of efficacy for other species may differ from that observed in sheep and cattle. Vaccination in these species would have to be undertaken under the cascade system under the direct personal responsibility of a veterinary surgeon.

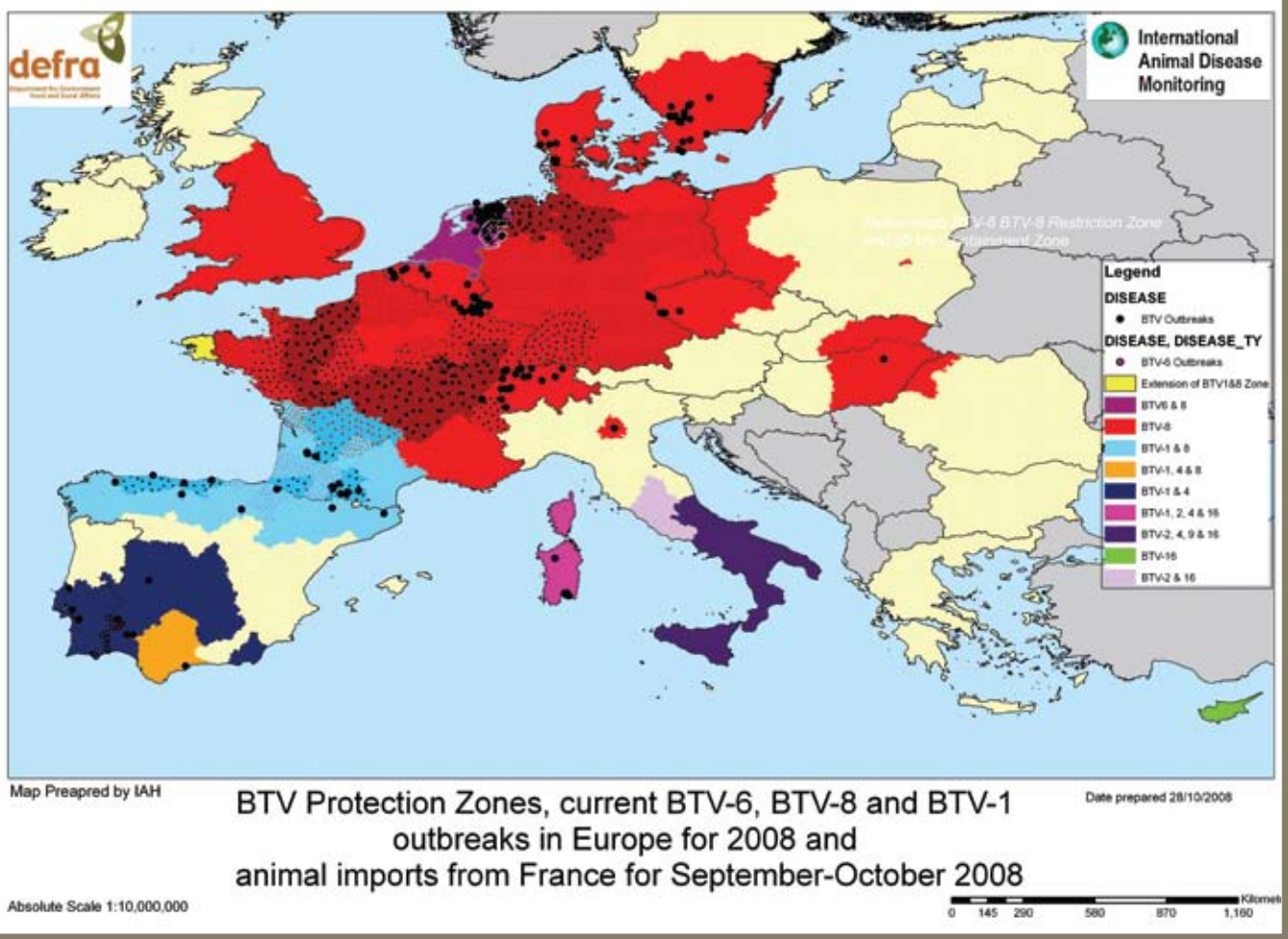
The choice of whether to use one or two doses of vaccine when used 'off licence' will lie with the prescribing veterinary surgeon.

Four bluetongue variants now in Europe

As The Official Veterinarian went to press it emerged that there are now four bluetongue serotypes present in Europe.

The latest strain was found in goat herds in Switzerland at the end of October. It is the first time scientists have discovered this strain, called 'Toggenburg Orbivirus' (TOV). TOV is believed to be so different from existing bluetongue virus that early

work undertaken by the Institute of Animal Health, the EU's bluetongue reference laboratory, has failed to identify any possible source for the virus. Although it has caused no overt clinical disease in the goats, if TOV started to spread and behave like other BTV strains, it could become a more serious threat to ruminants, especially as there is no vaccine against it.



PCR test for bluetongue now available from Veterinary Laboratories Agency

The Veterinary Laboratories Agency has worked in collaboration with the Institute of Animal Health (IAH) at Pirbright to introduce the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test for bluetongue virus. This test is now available via veterinary surgeons for pre-movement (UK) and export testing purposes only. For further information see www.vla.gov.uk.

Appointment of new CVO

Nigel Gibbens has been appointed as Defra's new Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO).



Nigel qualified as a veterinary surgeon in 1981 and has spent most of his career involved in animal health and welfare with lead roles on international trade and exotic diseases.

Since 1990 he has held a variety of operational and advisory positions in the Government's veterinary and policy services.

Nigel moved to the central animal health policy group in 1996 and worked on international trade for eight years, followed by surveillance and control of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and animal welfare. He has also worked in general veterinary practice and for Government veterinary services in Belize and Yemen.

REDUCING RED TAPE

The Whole Farm Approach (WFA) in England, the Red Tape Review in Wales and the SEARS programme in Scotland, are similar programmes that have been developed to improve the delivery of rural public services and increase access to information held by public bodies.

One area of work being explored by Animal Health is the co-ordination of OV visits for TB herd testing and Cattle Identity Inspections, so that the two can be undertaken simultaneously.

Work has been undertaken to set up the necessary processes and procedures to share TB test lists (mark forward lists) for TB Whole Herd Tests (WHT and WHT2) and Routine Herd Tests (RHT) with the relevant Payment Agencies.

OVs are being asked, as soon as the test date is agreed, and ideally not later than seven working days before the TB test date, to complete a template detailing

where and when a WHT, WHT2, or RHT are to take place and forward it to the appropriate Paying Agency (preferably by email) thus enabling them to coordinate their cattle identity inspections where appropriate with the TB test.

This new procedure should reduce the burden on farmers of gathering animals separately for each organisation.

There should also be improved animal welfare through reduced livestock handling, and gives greater confidence that all animals requiring a test have been presented.

Appointment of new Chief Executive

Defra has formally announced the appointment of Catherine Brown as Chief Executive for Animal Health.

Catherine took up her permanent post on 16 July, succeeding Steve Edwards who acted as CEO since the departure of Glenys Stacey earlier this year.

Catherine joined Animal Health in 2007 as Chief Operating Officer, with responsibility for all central and field operations. She will now work with colleagues to identify arrangements for the continuing leadership of Operations. Further information on this will be announced in due course.

Closure of Scrapie Monitoring Scheme

Following consultations in England, Scotland and Wales on the closure of the Scrapie Monitoring Scheme as part of the wider consultation on Cost and Responsibility Sharing, it has been decided that the Defra-administered Scrapie Monitoring Scheme in GB will be closed on 31 December 2008.

The purpose of the Defra-administered Scrapie Monitoring Scheme is to enable premises to meet the scrapie requirements of the animal health conditions governing the intra-Community trade in sheep and goats for breeding

From 1 January 2009, the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) will administer a Scrapie Monitoring Scheme in GB as part of the Scottish Agricultural College's Premium Sheep and Goat Health Schemes.

The scheme will be called the Scottish Agricultural College Scrapie Monitoring Scheme (SAC SMS).

It should be noted that the rules of the SAC SMS will specify the EU requirement that the certifying Veterinarian must be an Official Veterinarian (OV). Veterinarians who are not OVs wishing to continue acting for their clients in this respect, must be trained and appointed as OVs to the Notifiable Disease and Export panels. Any Veterinarians wishing to undertake such training should contact their local Animal Health Divisional Office.

Information will shortly be sent to all stakeholders (current Scheme members, veterinarians, AI centres, auctioneers and show organisers) on whom this information may impact.

TRANSPORT OF ANIMALS

NEW TRANSPORTER REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLYING FOR LONG JOURNEY TRANSPORTER AUTHORISATIONS

From 1 May 2008 transporters applying for a UK Type 2 Long Journey Transporter Authorisation (valid for all journeys over 65km including those over eight hours), will, where required, have to supply valid copies of their Competence

and Vehicle Approval Certificates along with their Type 2 application form.

The Type 2 application form has been revised to enable transporters to enter details of their Competence and Vehicle Approval Certificates.

NEW ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN

A new enforcement policy came into effect for infringements of welfare in transport rules from 1 May 2008.

Repeat or serious infringements in Great Britain of The Welfare of Animals (Transport) England Order 2006, The Welfare of

Animals (Transport) Scotland Regulations 2006, The Welfare of Animals (Transport) Wales Order 2007 or Council Regulation (EC No. 1/2005) may lead to Animal Health taking regulatory action against the responsible transporters or organisers, whether they be GB or non-GB transporters.

CLOSURE OF THE OLDER CATTLE DISPOSAL SCHEME (OCDS)

The OCDS will close on 31 December 2008, and all animals to be slaughtered at an abattoir by the end of the year must have been booked in by 30 September 2008.

From 1 January 2009 it is likely that farmers will have to cover the cost of disposal of these animals.

Closure of Ram Genotyping Scheme and end to free collection and disposal of fallen adult cattle

It has been announced that all farm visits under the voluntary Ram Genotyping Scheme (RGS) will end in December 2008. No new applications will be accepted from 30 September 2008 and the Scheme will be wound up in March 2009.

Since 2001, the RGS has provided free scrapie genotyping of 1.8m sheep in 11,000 flocks contributing to the significant increases in the resistance of mainstream breeds and the reduction in scrapie. The Compulsory Scrapie Flocks Scheme is unaffected. Breeders will be able to continue genotyping through commercial test providers.

The National Sheep Association and the Rare Breeds Survival Trust will take over its semen archive in November 2008. The Scottish Agricultural College will administer a new industry-funded Scrapie Monitoring Scheme from January 2009.

This news forms part of a package of measures announced on how testing for TSEs will be managed in the future following consultation with the industry on TSE responsibility and cost-sharing proposals.

The number of cases of BSE and scrapie in Great Britain has continued to fall. In 2007 there were 53 confirmed cases of BSE compared to 37,000 in 1992, and 82 confirmed cases of scrapie, compared to 597 in 1999. Further reductions are expected in 2008. The requirement to destroy cattle slaughtered over 30 months old, under the Over Thirty Months (OTM) Scheme, was replaced with BSE testing in 2005 and the export ban was removed in 2006. Defra has therefore decided that industry will now take control of the cost of collecting and disposing of fallen adult cattle.

Controls in abattoirs, including the testing of cattle and the removal of specified

risk material, such as brain and spinal cord, will remain in place, as will controls on feed to protect animal health.

The RGS was reviewed after EU Member States agreed that breeding for scrapie resistance should not as planned become compulsory. As part of that review the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC) concluded that, having regard to the latest research and surveillance testing, the prevalence of BSE in the UK sheep population is most likely zero, or very low if present at all. It said that the RGS will have little impact on public health protection but the strategy of selective breeding for scrapie resistance remains a scientifically valid approach for eradicating classical scrapie.

End to free collection and disposal service for fallen adult cattle

From mid January 2009, the free collection and disposal

service for adult cattle i.e. cattle aged over 24 months that have died or been killed on farm will end. To help industry in the transition period, £2m will be made available to the National Fallen Stock Company for cattle that will still need to be tested for BSE. Subject to final EU agreement, the age above which fallen cattle must be tested is expected to increase from 24 months to 48 months on 1 January 2009. This subsidy will last for a year, after which, the Company will transfer to industry ownership.

Further information:

www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/ahw-nextsteps/index.htm

www.defra.gov.uk/news/2008/080930b.htm

www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2008/09/30150229

UK secures individual recording concessions for sheep and goat industry

The UK has secured amendments to EC regulations on the individual recording requirements for sheep and goats, which will reduce the administrative burden on keepers.

EC Council Regulation 21/2004 introduces electronic identification (EID) of sheep and individual recording of sheep and goats from 31 December 2009.

The industry raised concerns that the requirement to record individual details of animals

that are not electronically identified on movement documents was too burdensome.

- no animals have to be individually recorded on a movement document until 1 January 2011,
- No animals born before 31 December 2009 have

to be individually recorded on a movement document until 31 December 2011; and

- No animal born before 31 December 2009 and moving to slaughter (directly or via a market) have to be recorded on a movement document at all.

New customer registration processes

Animal Health's new customer registration and contact management processes have been introduced in all the Divisional Offices

You and your clients may be affected by these new processes, as they may be asked to provide additional information about their business and their livestock when they contact Animal Health, with a call-back option if it's not a convenient time.

Animal Health will also review the information it holds on a regular basis and in future may contact customers directly.

CATTLE COMPENSATION (ENGLAND) ORDER 2006 – JUDICIAL REVIEW JUDGEMENT

During July 2008 Defra received the judgment of the Judicial Review on the current cattle compensation arrangements in England, which found in favour of the claimant. The Court concluded that the Cattle Compensation (England) Order 2006 breaches the principal of equality in relation to high value animals. However, the judgment did also recognise that for most TB affected cattle the table valuation system

produces a valuation that is a reasonable approximation of true healthy market value.

Defra has lodged an appeal against the judgement – to be heard, in the Appeals Court, in Spring 2009. The table valuation system will continue to operate until such time as any changes needed, as a result of the final judgment, have been identified and implemented

OIE grants UK 'controlled' BSE risk status

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) officially declared that the UK is 'controlled risk' status for BSE.

The OIE sets out risk-based criteria for the export of live bovines and bovine products. It agreed a new system of categorising exporting countries on the basis of BSE risk as 'negligible', 'controlled' or 'undetermined'.

The UK applied for categorisation under the new system in March 2007. Confirmation of the UK's 'controlled risk' status will support the opening of more international markets for the export of UK cattle and beef.

OVS TO BE CENTRAL TO TB HEALTH CHECK WALES

As a first step in the delivery of the TB Eradication Programme in Wales, the Minister for Rural Affairs, Elin Jones AM, announced a comprehensive one-off programme of testing of all cattle herds in Wales, irrespective of their current testing interval. This initiative, called the *TB Health Check Wales* is compulsory for all herds. It started on 1 October 2008 and runs until 31 December 2009.

The *TB Health Check Wales* aims to provide a more detailed understanding of the current level and location of bovine TB, so that informed decisions can be taken by the Welsh Assembly Government

as it reviews the future of cattle controls and surveillance policy. The information generated by the Health Check will be factored into such important decisions as the future testing intervals of herds across Wales.

Clearly, this initiative will rely heavily on the goodwill and hard work of veterinary surgeons. There is a pivotal role to be played by the profession in the Eradication Programme and the Welsh Assembly Government working with Animal Health requests the full support of all practices involved in the delivery of this first concrete step toward the implementation of

a realistic Eradication Programme for TB.

Veterinary capacity to take on the extra testing required is currently being assessed. As a contingency, Animal Health has initiated a programme to train additional lay testers in case of a shortage of veterinary resources. To date practices have indicated that there is sufficient capacity to deliver all the required testing. Lay testers will mainly be used for carrying out tests that are returned to Animal Health for whatever reason. It is not the intention that TB testing should be taken away from practices.

Review of TB testing procedures (the Comer II Report) – No change to tuberculin testing instructions

Following a disputed bTB skin test result on a Dexter bull calf in Devon in late 2005, the certifying OV admitted to not having carried out the test in accordance with official instructions which replicate text within the relevant EU directive. In response Phillip Comer of DNV Consulting was asked by Defra's Chief Veterinary Officer to review TB Test procedures. His report was published on 10 August 2006.

Comer found "no factors ... that would fundamentally undermine

the validity of the TB Testing process....[however] routine deviations from the Manual of Procedures were common and in some aspects almost universal..." He recommended a thorough review of the test procedures.

In response Defra, the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Executive reviewed test procedures, and concluded, based on legal advice, that there was little room for discretion or flexibility in the interpretation of the prescriptive test

methodology. As a result the current instructions would not be amended.

Following concerns expressed by the veterinary profession, Defra agreed to reconsider this position and explore further the scope for a more flexible approach. Having now concluded this further review, the position remains unchanged, that is that no changes to the current standing instructions for TB testing are possible at present.

At a time of increasing prevalence of bovine TB and greater critical

focus on control efforts, it would be inappropriate for government to agree to any apparent dilution of diagnostic procedures by agreeing to veterinary surgeons carrying out official skin tests for tuberculosis in cattle in a manner that does not fully comply with European law.

Within the next few weeks, a new TB related CD-ROM will be sent to all practices. This CD will include an updated set of TB instructions and new training presentations covering many aspects of bovine TB.

One Wales TB Eradication Programme

Continued from front page

encourage herd owners to follow best practice.

- **Identify and remove all on-farm sources of infection.**

A targeted cull of badgers in TB high incidence areas, subject to strict regulation and meeting a number of requirements. An intensive action pilot will take place in an area identified

as a TB hotspot. The badger however remains a protected species in Wales and the conditions of the Badger Act remain in place.

SERVICE OF TB2

Animal Health Divisional Offices (AHDs) are still finding that some farms with TB breakdowns have not been served a TB2 restriction notice. **If you find a reactor or an inconclusive at a test, the farmer has to be given a TB2 at the time** and it needs to be copied to the AHD, accompanying the test charts. There is no need to serve another TB2 if the farm is already under restriction (e.g. at a Short Interval Test) but in that case please annotate the TB52 "TB2 already in force", in order to avoid any confusion.

It is also being found that a number of TB2s are not completed correctly. Please remember to specify what it is that you are restricting – the location of the animals must be specified in the large box in the middle of the notice. The box cannot be left blank, as nothing would be restricted. If you write "as above" you might find that you have restricted the farmer's house but not his farm! If you just write the farm name (e.g. "Home Farm") you may find that other premises, but also part of the same CPH, (e.g. "Keep grazing at Church Farm") are technically left unrestricted. If in doubt, use the wording **"All premises under your occupation within this specific holding"** (as used in those TB2s served when a test goes overdue).

Please remember to record as a part test if there are more cattle to be tested and record the number not done in the appropriate column. The complete test box can be ticked when all eligible cattle on all of the herd locations have been done.

TB ANERGIC COW WITH TUBERCULOUS MASTITIS

In April 2008 a Friesian cow with chronic mastitis was reported as a possible source of TB infection to three calves which were positive to the skin test. Whilst the dairy herd had confirmed disease, this cow had passed 11 TB skin tests since 2003.

In February 2008 the three calves sucking milk from her were positive to the TB skin test, but they did not have visible lesions at post-mortem examination. The cow passed the skin test.

In April 2008, the next three calves (three months old) which were sucking from her also reacted positively to the TB test, but this time one of them had visible lesions at post-mortem. The cow again passed a skin test. The housing conditions of these calves made contact with wildlife extremely difficult, and the three calves only sucked milk from the suspect cow.

Permission was sought to carry out a gIFN blood test, in order to find out if the

cow was the source of infection of TB to the calves (and maybe to the rest of the dairy herd) as it was suspected that the cow might be an anergic animal. Both gIFN test and a Rapid Antibody test were positive.

In view of the results, the animal was slaughtered. The carcass was condemned because of the amount of TB lesions found (generalised TB). Visible lesions were found in the head nodes, broncho-mediastinal nodes, mesenteric nodes, supramammary glands, udder tissue and liver. All lesions found were typical of TB. Samples of lesioned material were submitted for mycobacterial culture to the VLA in June, and were returned as positive for *M. bovis* spoligotype 17 (SB0263 from "<http://www.Mbovis.org>" www.Mbovis.org). This spoligotype was within its geographical homerange, and therefore not unusual for the area of this breakdown.



Retropharyngeal node



Mesenteric node



Udder tissue

Rocio Abad, Veterinary Officer, Gloucester AHD

Test procedures

Please ensure that tags are read on both visits and that all paperwork is returned promptly – i.e. within five days.

It is particularly important that test charts be submitted promptly when disclosing reactors or IRs or where restrictions are likely to be lifted as a result of the test. The test charts should also be signed and certified correctly.

The ear-tag numbers of reactors and IRs should be double checked (and written clearly if not input electronically) to ensure removal/retest of the correct cattle.

UNAUTHORISED TB TESTS

Some OV's are continuing to arrange tests with their clients despite not receiving instructions from Animal Health to do so.

You must not undertake any TB test (other than Pre & Post Movement tests) if it has not been authorised by the AHD. Failure to follow this rule could mean that you will not be paid for such tests.

PRE-MOVEMENT TB TEST CHARTS

The Pre-movement TB Test Monitoring Unit (PMTU), based at the Gloucester Animal Health Office, monitors the compliance of farmers whose cattle are eligible for pre-movement TB tests. As part of the monitoring process, the PMTU writes to farmers who are seemingly non-compliant due to the absence of a valid TB test covering the movement of cattle off their premises. In response a large number of these farmers confirm that a pre-movement TB test was carried out; and that the movement was therefore compliant. This situation is the result

of OV's failing to send a copy of the pre-movement TB test chart to the AHDO, meaning that their client's testing records are not up-to-date.

Cattle movements in January and February 2008, resulted in PMTU writing to 108 farmers, of which 50% responded to say that a valid test had been carried out. On several occasions, the farmers had also not been provided with a copy of the test chart - which is essential for them to have to provide evidence to the market or purchaser that the cattle being sold have had a valid pre-movement TB test.

Pre-movement tests are private TB

tests paid for by the farmer, and it is important that they receive a signed test chart as evidence of testing. A copy of the test chart must be submitted to the local AHDO, even if the result is negative, in the same prompt manner as any other type of TB test carried out on behalf of and paid for by Animal Health - i.e. within five days. All such PRMT tests are entered onto a database, and failure to submit pre-movement TB test charts could cause your clients to be unnecessarily investigated by the Pre-movement Monitoring Unit and possibly referred to the Local Authority for investigation.

NEW DVM APPOINTMENTS

The following DVM appointments have recently been announced:

- **Galashiels** Peter Melens has taken up the post of DVM Galashiels on 19 August
- **Perth** Christine Middlemiss took up the post of DVM Perth in September
- **Reigate** Lisa Shaul will act as DVM Reigate on a temporary basis for up to six months from 18 August
- **Lincoln** Clare Taylor will act as DVM Lincoln on a temporary basis for up to six months from a date to be agreed
- **Gloucester** Chris Williamson has returned to Gloucester AHDO as DVM
- **Cardiff** Fi Hudson is acting as DVM Cardiff on a temporary basis
- **Carmarthen** Lynne Davis has been seconded to Carmarthen as DVM following David Thomas's temporary transfer to project work in Worcester

New TB testing intervals - in force since 18 August 2008

The 2008 Herd and Parish Testing Interval (PTI) Review has been carried out and herd owners have been informed of their new Herd and Parish Testing Intervals. New PTI maps and lookup tables can be found on the Animal Health website at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalhealth/managing-disease/bovinetb/parishtesting.htm>

OVs should be aware of 'testing window'

Incidents have occurred where farmers have been complaining that OV's have not notified them of when their TB test is due in enough time for it to be carried out before the due date. This has resulted in such farmers going under TB2 restrictions.

Although it is not the OV's

responsibility to notify the farmer of when a TB test needs to be done by, please be aware that the 'test date' stated on the worklist is usually the latest date by which the test should be completed (short interval and IR re-tests being an exception to this). The test chart should also be

received by the AHDO by that date in order to prevent the herd going under TB2 movement restrictions.

The herd owner is given a 'testing window' in which to get the test completed. This window appears on the notification letter they receive from Animal Health and is either two months

if the herd is on annual testing or three months if the herd is on 24, 36 or 48 month testing. The herd's TB testing interval is stated on this work list. Please consider the 'testing window' for each herd to help reduce the number of herds that are placed under movement restrictions.

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

Health and safety at work is a perennial hot topic and responsibility for veterinarians undertaking work on behalf of Animal Health has been an issue needing clarity. Work undertaken as part of the Official Veterinarian Reform Programme has sought to do this and Animal Health's Health and Safety Manager, Andrew Love, provides some transparency.

Responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of employees rests firmly with employers and for work performed in the capacity of an Official Veterinarian that means the employing practice. But what does this mean?

All employers should have a policy that is suitable and appropriate to the organisation. Where reasonably practical, practices must provide a safe working environment and with appropriate systems and procedures. Information must be provided to employees, including suitable instruction and training and also provision should be made to provide for and ensure the welfare of staff.

It is important that practices understand their responsibilities both under the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Animal Health's Health and Safety Policy (published as the State Veterinary Service's Health and Safety Policy) which

is available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalhealth/official-veterinarians>. They must also know how to undertake and apply risk assessment and take correct action, ensure appropriate communication and co-operation takes place between employee and employer, and know where to find Health and Safety assistance and information. Advice given to employees should be available for audit, and checks should also be undertaken to ensure that best practice is being followed.

Employers' Health & Safety Responsibilities

Practices' responsibilities can be summarised as having a duty to:

- Care
 - For self and others
 - New Entrants are a special risk through inexperience and unfamiliarity with their surroundings

- Comprehend - understand the hazards/risks
- Comply - with safety legislation & procedures
- Co-operate - between employer & employee
- To ensure best practice is adhered to.

How can Animal Health help? The agency is currently using generic risk assessment (GRA) formats but has drafted the two main GRAs, covering 'Working Away From Animal Health Premises' and 'Animal Handling' and these have been trialled effectively during Animal Health's handling of Foot and Mouth in 2007. These will be available to practices at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalhealth/official-veterinarians> for advice in defining and shaping their own assessments and advice.

OV training – be prepared

It is important that practices appreciate their responsibilities in preparing potential OVs before attending the initial training sessions at the AHDOs and then whilst they are at the provisional stage.

The principal/senior partner of a practice is asked to confirm competence in TB, Brucella and anthrax work prior to this training. In reality we find that the majority of OVs attending this training have very little experience.

CHANGING PRACTICE – LET US KNOW

There have been a number of occurrences of OVs changing practices without informing their local AHDO (either their old one or, if transferring divisions, their new one). This causes problems when it comes to making payments, since payments are made to the practice, and not to the individual.

If we do not know that you have changed practice, we will pay your previous employer for any work done. All we need to change the practice details are your name, your SP Number, the date that you left your old practice and the date you started at your new practice, on headed notepaper. It can be posted or faxed. We will do the rest.

CLOSURE OF THE OLDER CATTLE DISPOSAL SCHEME (OCDS)

The OCDS will close on 31 December 2008, and all animals to be slaughtered at an abattoir by the end of the year must have been booked in by 30 September 2008.

From 1 January 2009 it is likely that farmers will have to cover the cost of disposal of these animals.

AROUND THE DIVISIONS



PRESTON

All Export Health Certification previously issued by Preston AHDO is now being carried out by the team at Carlisle. Please contact the Carlisle team at Hadrian House, Wavell Drive, Rosehill Ind. Estate, Carlisle, CA1 2TB Tel: 01228 403600. Fax: 01228 591900, for any future export certification related work or queries, including requests for specimen certification.

CARLISLE

The formal opening of the new Carlisle Central Operations Unit took place on 27 August, with local staff, directors and stakeholders invited for a buffet lunch and celebration. The event also marked the retirement of Carlisle DVM John Kelsey.

PERTH

The Perth AHDO has a new number for Out of Hours contact. The new number is 07071 506050. Please note that this is not replacing 01738 602211 which remains as the main office number during working hours.

LOSS OF DIRECT PETS PORTAL INTO SCOTLAND

The only direct ferry link between mainland Scotland and Europe was axed with the last sailing. The Zeebrugge to Rosyth route was the only portal for PETS registered animals to enter Scotland directly (not taking account of the provision made for assistance dogs).

The operators – Superfast Ferries – stopped short of announcing why they had

ceased operating the service. However, sailings were halved in 2005, as a lack of demand for freight traffic meant that a daily crossing was no longer viable.

712 PETS registered animals entered Rosyth from Zeebrugge in 2007.

It is hoped that the route will be reopened in the near future by an alternative ferry operator.

PERTH AUCTION MART TO SHUT DOWN

United Auctions (UA) has announced that the Perth Mart is to close. The Perth and existing mart at Kildean, Stirling will be merged next June, with sales being held at the new Stirling Agricultural Centre which is under construction at Hill of Drip, Stirling.

In the meantime, the marts will continue to operate as usual, with no disruption to scheduled auction sales.

David Leggatt of UA said, "Over the years, the world famous Perth bull sales have become a marquee event for international cattle breeders, and UA plans to continue with the name when the sales relocate to Stirling."

Perth Animal Health Office will remain the contact point for all official animal health issues at the new mart.

INVERNESS

EXERCISE BEN WYVIS

Exercise Ben Wyvis is a joint exercise due to take place at Inverness AHDO on 19/20 November 2008 in conjunction with Inverurie AHDO. The scenario is still being finalised but it is expected that it will cover suspicion of and confirmation of swine vesicular disease. Key operational partners will be in attendance: SGRPID, SEPA, Northern Constabulary and Highland Council. The exercise will take place in real time with a minimal amount of field work at the IP which has been agreed with the site owner.

CHANGE OF TELEPHONE NUMBER

Inverness AHDO telephone number has changed to: 01463 728800. The out of hours (07000 780126) and fax numbers (01463 711495) are unchanged

NEW STAFF

New VO Susana Ramos joined us on 1 September. There is currently one vacancy for a VO within this division.

AROUND THE

AHDO TRAINING DATES

Bury St Edmunds
9 December 2008.

TAUNTON

OV SUPERVISED BTB TEST PROGRAMME

Since May 2008 Taunton AHDO has been issuing guidance documentation in a phased programme to assist OVs in preparing for, and satisfactorily completing, the required supervised bTB test.

The process involved has seen the documents despatched to selected practices, with subsequent follow-up work carried out by various Veterinary Officers in assisting OVs with any questions or queries they have prior to their test, up to and culminating in the satisfactory completion of the supervised test.

The process has been well received by those who have taken part to date in helping them to maintain the required standard that Animal Health seeks in carrying out bTB testing. This could not have been achieved without the co-operation of veterinary and administrative staff, both between the practices involved and Taunton AHDO.

The programme will continue throughout the coming months, the intention being to carry out supervised tests as required. The guidance documentation will also be despatched, for information and use, to all practices in Somerset and Dorset whose OVs carry out bTB testing.

If Somerset or Dorset based OVs should have any questions regarding this programme in the meantime, please contact Taunton AHDO on 01823 337922, and ask for Peter Crea, Sue Rowland, or Sue Hay.

CARMARTHEN

EXTENDED WELSH BADGER 'FOUND DEAD' SURVEY

During 2006 Animal Health undertook a project on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) to help in the collection of badger carcasses for a "found" Dead Badger Survey. The objective of the survey was to estimate the presence of the M. Bovis infection in dead badgers found anywhere in Wales. This work ceased in May 2006.

WAG have asked that a similar survey be undertaken in the Carmarthen AHDO area only, centring on a specific area. This work will be carried out under an amended Service Level Agreement between Animal Health and the Welsh Assembly Government.

Staff at Carmarthen AHDO should be aware that Section W of Chapter 23 has been revised and outlines the agreed practices and procedures that should be followed for the Welsh Found Dead Badger Survey. All carcasses are to be delivered to the Carmarthen VLA Regional Laboratory.

EXETER

STAFF CHANGES

Dr Stuart Lake, VO, retired from Animal Health on the 30 June 2008 after nearly 19 years service.

Mike Farrant, VO, retired from Animal Health on 31 August 2008 after 29 years of service.

We are pleased to welcome Beatriz Del Yelma De Haro, VO, who started 14 July 2008 and Agnieszka Dabrowska VI who started on 2 September 2008.

INVERURIE

Gordon Smith, Senior Animal Health Officer at Inverurie for many years, has retired and is replaced by Donna Nixon from Perth Division.

We are hoping to arrange OV training for the first week in December. We will contact local practices when the dates are confirmed.

PERTH & GALASHIELS

EXERCISE OCELOT – FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE (FMD)

Perth and Galashiels Animal Health Divisional Offices (AHDOs) are in the planning stage of a joint FMD exercise, which is programmed to take place during November 2008.

The exercise will provide the opportunity to rigorously assess the readiness of the divisional office to make the transition from AHDO to Local Disease Control Centre (LDCC). Strategic level management will be achieved through the involvement of the Scottish Government, Disease Strategy Group (DSG), Edinburgh; the Strategic Coordinating Group in the Scottish Central region; and disease control situation permitting, participation by Contingency Planning Division in the guise of the National Disease Control Centre.

This is an exercise designed to be full scale and will include field operations at a livestock market prior to the establishment of the LDCC, which will specifically focus upon the first 24 hours of the disease outbreak.

DIVISIONS



NEWCASTLE

DISABLED RIGHTS – AIR TRAVEL FOR ASSISTANCE DOGS

A new EU Regulation - Rights of Disabled Persons and Persons with Reduced Mobility When Travelling by Air – came into force in July 2008. Under this, 'Assistance dogs' (Guide Dogs, hearing Dogs and Dogs for the Disabled) should

be allowed to travel in the cabin of an aircraft to support their owner. For entry into Great Britain, the dog must in addition be compliant with the PETS scheme.

Newcastle AHDO have been involved in the approval process for

Newcastle International Airport. This includes examining the requirements in terms of facilities and staff training at the airport. Training sessions are to be set up for airport staff, supported by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (GDBA).

BTV8 IMPORTED INTO COUNTY DURHAM

On 3 September 2008, a consignment of 35 heifers was imported from Germany to a farm in County Durham. All but four had recently completed their BTV8 vaccination course prior to export. The vehicle was treated with insecticide in Holland. On arrival the imported heifers were placed in isolation and treated with Eprinex pour on. Movement restrictions were placed on these heifers.

Immediate post import testing by PCR revealed that 18 out of 35 animals were PCR positive with CT values suggesting recent infection and bluetongue virus serotype 8 viraemia. Concurrent tests for BTV1 were all negative. Resident cattle on the farm completed their BTV8 vaccination course shortly after the imported heifers arrived.

Insecticidal treatments have been applied to the whole herd at the Durham farm to prevent any local circulation of virus.

At no stage have there been any clinical signs of bluetongue in the imported cattle and none so far in the resident herd.

RECENT FLOODING IN NORTHUMBERLAND

It started raining on Friday morning and didn't ease until Sunday morning – on ground that was already saturated from one of the wettest summers on record. The town of Morpeth made national news in September as thousands of residents were evacuated as the River Wansbeck swept through their homes. Further north another tragedy was taking place as the River Till and its tributaries breached the dykes and flooding the Milfield plains to the highest levels for more than a century.

Large numbers of sheep and a few cattle graze this land between areas of forestry and arable land. About a thousand sheep were drowned that weekend, and a few cattle. Two weeks

later lagoons created by water trapped behind the dykes remained, preventing access to strips of land where more carcasses appeared as the water levels slowly receded. The whole community of this valley has been out helping the farmers retrieve the carcasses – a massive and slow process particularly through the forestry with sheep hung several metres up.

The financial impact from the loss of livestock and acres of crops is obvious and the agreement by the RDA to foot the disposal costs has been welcomed by the farming community. When the gloomy clouds have lifted from this region it may be appropriate to determine if more could have been done to prevent this happening.

WORCESTER

POSITIVE BLUETONGUE IMPORTS

As in several other parts of England, there was an import of BT positive cattle from Germany into Herefordshire in August. This was done quite legally

because the origin and destination were in the same serotype 8 PZ. However, virus had been circulating actively in that area of Germany and there was not a lot of

common sense in doing so.

If you have the opportunity, please advise your clients to consider the source of livestock and ascertain the disease levels before

committing to buy, regardless of price. In this particular case, all of the cattle, both imported and resident, are housed, so the risk of spread to neighbouring herds is reduced.

AND FINALLY...

PET PASSPORT AIDE MEMOIRE

Pet cats, dogs and ferrets travelling to another EU country need a passport to travel whether they are returning to the UK or not.

If travelling on a passport, no other paperwork is required; neither does the animal need a pre-travel check up unless a 'fit to travel' statement is required by the airline or ferry operator. If a 'fit to travel' statement is required, the vet can complete Section IX (Clinical Examination) of the passport after examining the animal before departure from the UK, or provide a letter on practice-headed paper, which is also acceptable (particularly as the passport contains only five Clinical Examination sections.) Owners should check beforehand with their transport operator that this meets their requirements.

The microchip MUST be recorded in Section III and MUST include a date of Microchipping, or a statement of "Prior to [date of vaccination]" for those pets where the actual date of chip insertion is unknown. The tick and tapeworm treatment MUST be accurately recorded in sections VI and VII of the passport.

For vets to issue a passport, animals must usually be at least 12 weeks old at which point they should be micro chipped first then vaccinated against rabies in accordance with the vaccine manufacturers instructions. Tick and tapeworm treatment is also required.

There is a waiting period of 21 days between vaccination and travel. The animal can travel to another EU country as soon as the 21 day period has elapsed.

Pets under 12 weeks old may travel to Member States with a pet passport and microchip only, but approval to do so must be gained from the competent authority of the destination country.

Animals not returning to the UK do not need a rabies antibody blood test. However, animals travelling to certain EU destinations may require further preparatory procedures. It is recommended that pet owners contact the authorities of the destination, prior to departure, to ensure all requirements are met.

Those animals intended for return to the UK need a rabies antibody blood test to confirm that the rabies antibody titre has reached the minimum required level. They must then complete a six month wait from the date of a satisfactory blood sample being taken, before being allowed to enter/re-enter the UK, unless to quarantine. They can leave the UK but not return until the six month period has passed.

Rabies vaccine validity periods are exactly as detailed on the vaccine manufacturer's data sheet in the country that the vaccine was given.

Every time a vet issues a new passport the details must be recorded on the Passport Control Sheet.

Further detail should be obtained from the relevant veterinary guidance notes, the Defra website www.defra.gov.uk or the Pet Travel Scheme helpline on 0870 241 1710.



USEFUL NUMBERS AND CONTACTS

Animal Health Information Line:

0844 884 4600

Collection & disposal of fallen stock:

0800 525 890

Defra Helpline:

0845 933 5577

British Cattle Movement Tracing System:

0845 050 1234

British Cattle Movement Tracing System (Wales):

0845 050 3456

GB Poultry Register:

0800 634 1112

Horse passports:

0845 933 5577

Horse passports (Scotland):

0131 244 6174

Livestock Identification Helpline :

0845 050 9876

Pet Travel Scheme:

0870 241 1710

Poultry Register Helpline :

0800 634 1112

National Fallen Stock Scheme :

0845 054 8888

National Scrapie Plan

Helpline :

0845 601 4858

Welfare in Transit Helpline :

0845 603 8395

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