

International Trade: Overview of the UK's Animal and Public Health Infrastructure.

When negotiating conditions for export of animals or animal products to third countries (i.e. non EU countries), Defra is often asked to submit questionnaires relating to the animal and public health situation in the UK. The purpose of these pages is to provide the most commonly requested information, or to give directions to the many excellent existing sources of information in the public domain covering the following areas:

- Structure and Functions of the UK Competent Health Authority
- How Export Certification Works
- Veterinary supervision in meat plants
- Pig identification and traceability
- Animal disease situation in the UK
- Veterinary surveillance in the UK
- Disease control in the UK
- Veterinary Health and Public Health legislation
- Animal feeds – production, control and legislation
- Controls on veterinary medicines including vaccines
- Veterinary residues surveillance

Structure and Functions of UK Competent Health Authority

The United Kingdom (UK) comprises the countries of England, Scotland and Wales (collectively known as Great Britain) and Northern Ireland. The UK is a Member State of the European Union (EU). Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have devolved administrations with some legislative powers. For the purposes of local government, Great Britain is divided into 177 Counties, Metropolitan Districts and Unitary Authorities. "Local Authorities" are responsible for administration and enforcement at this level. The following organisations are involved in animal and public health issues in the UK.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

All veterinary and animal health issues are the responsibility of the Animal Health and Welfare Directorate General, headed by the Chief Veterinary Officer. The Animal Health and Welfare Directorate General is made up of the Animal Health Directorate, the TSE and Zoonoses Directorate and the Veterinary Directorate. Within the Veterinary Directorate, the International Animal Health Division, which comprises policy makers, administrative staff and qualified veterinary surgeons, is responsible for all trade, import and export issues relating to animals and animal products.

Animal Health (AH) is an Agency of Defra, and is responsible for the delivery of animal health and welfare policies in England, Scotland and Wales. It plays an active role in disease policy and emergency preparedness, disease prevention, surveillance of endemic diseases and zoonoses, control of animal by-products, livestock identification, animal welfare, exports of animals and animal products (including pre-export quarantine and training/monitoring Official Veterinarians involved in export certification), controls of artificial breeding facilities, import controls and residue controls.

Local Veterinary Inspectors (LVIs) are veterinary surgeons working in private practice; there are currently around 7,000 of them. They are appointed by Animal Health to carry out, as agents of the Secretary of State, certain official duties throughout GB under the requirements of the Animal Health Act 1981 such as export certification and blood testing. Their activities are directed and monitored by Animal Health.

Food Standards Agency is an independent Government agency, which is responsible for public health issues and consumer interests in relation to food. Its aims are to reduce food borne illness, improve food safety right through the food chain, helping people to eat more healthily; promoting honest and informative labelling to help consumers, promoting best practice within the food industry and improving the enforcement of food law.

With regard to meat production, it is responsible for approval of slaughterhouses, cutting premises and cold stores handling fresh meat, poultry and rabbit meat, wild game meat, meat preparations, meat products in accordance with EU legislation and auditing the performance of meat inspectors and Official Veterinary Surgeons of the Meat Hygiene Service.

[Meat Hygiene Service \(MHS\)](#) is an Executive Agency of the Food Standards Agency and is responsible for enforcing hygiene legislation in licensed fresh meat premises. The MHS website provides more information about the work they carry out in meat plants.

[Local Authorities](#) (local government bodies) are also responsible for enforcing food and consumer legislation on behalf of the Food Standard Agency. [Local Authority Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services](#) (LACORS) supports and represents Local Government throughout the UK in relation to arrangements for regulatory services, including animal health and welfare.

[Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland \(DARDNI\)](#) DARDNI is the Northern Ireland's equivalent Department dealing with rural and animal health and welfare issues. The Veterinary Public Health and Animal Movement Control provides the equivalent service to the Meat Hygiene Service in Great Britain.

[Veterinary Laboratories](#)

A number of specialist veterinary laboratories, which provide veterinary diagnostic and research facilities, support the veterinary field services in the United Kingdom:

[Veterinary Laboratories Agency](#)

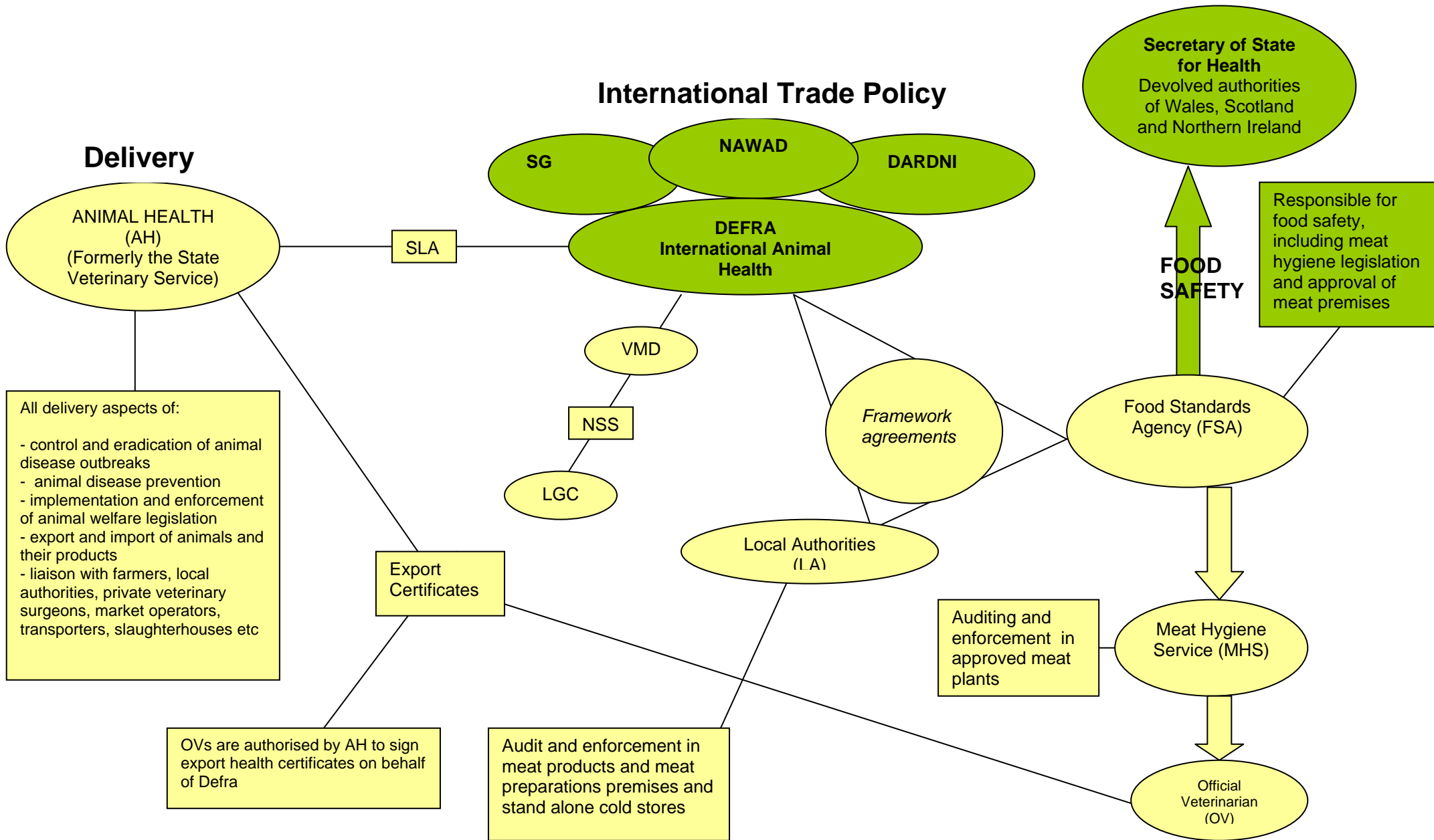
[Institute of Animal Health Laboratories](#)

[Veterinary Medicines Directorate](#)

[Veterinary Sciences Division Service \(Northern Ireland\).](#)

[Meat & Livestock Commission \(MLC\)](#)

The Meat & Livestock Commission (MLC) is a Non Departmental Public Body, funded through the collection of levies on sheep, pigs and cattle slaughtered for consumption or exported live. Its purpose is to promote efficiency in the livestock and livestock products industry, whilst having regard to the interests of consumers and members of those industries.



KEY

Central Government / policy

Executive Agency / delivery

Formal link

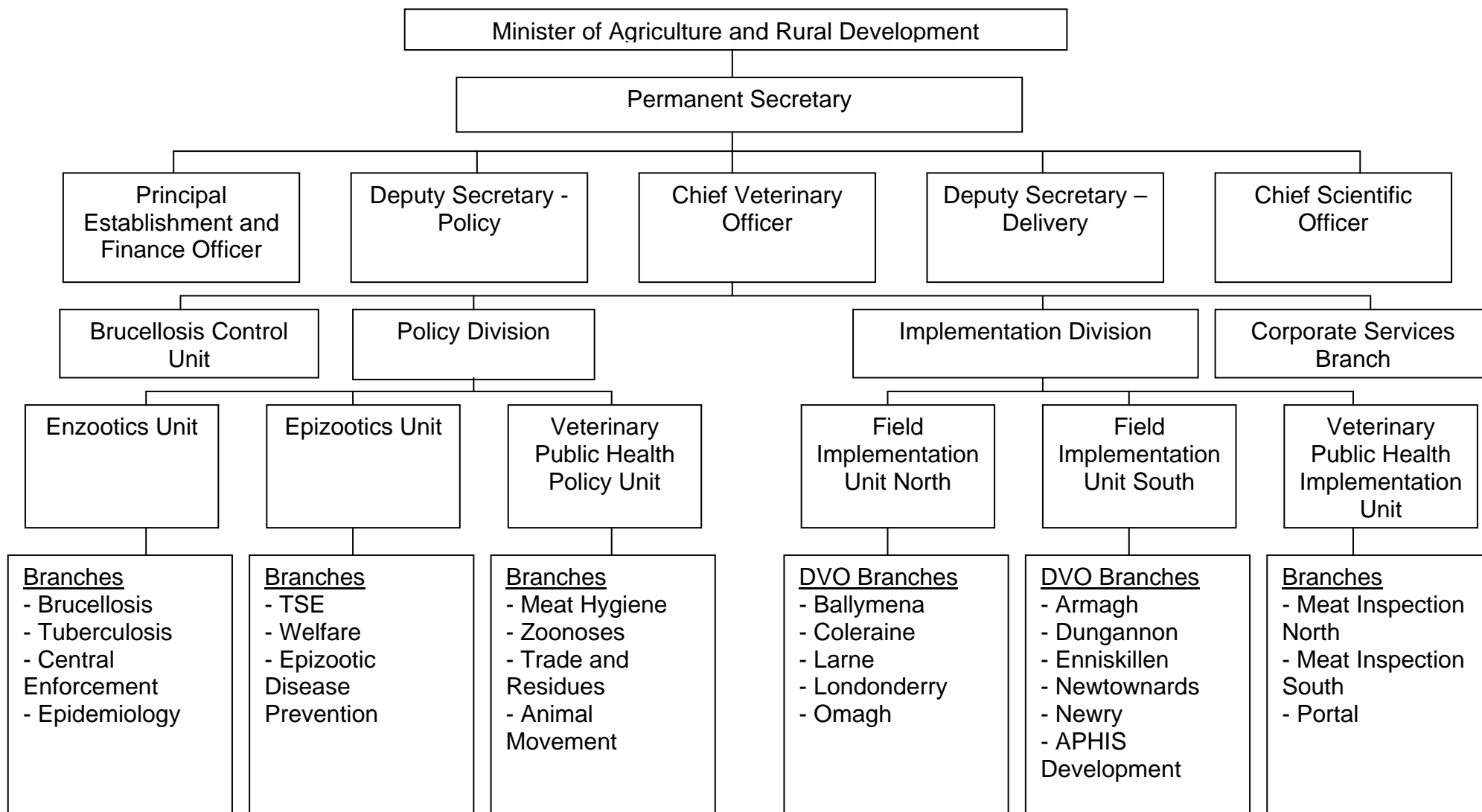
Information box



GLOSSARY

CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
DEFRA	Department for Environment, food and Rural Affairs
DARDNI	Department for Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland
MHS	Meat Hygiene Service
NAWAD	National Assembly for Wales – Agricultural Department
SG	Scottish Government
AH	Animal Health
SLA	Service Level Agreement
VMD	Veterinary Medicines Directorate
NSS	National Surveillance Scheme
LGC	Laboratory of the Government Chemist

Organisation of the Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture and Rural Development



How Export Certification Works

Administration

Animal Health Divisional Offices (AHDOs) of Animal Health (AH) issue export health certificates to Official Veterinarians (OVs). Certificates are printed on security water marked paper by an integrated computer system (CENTAUR). This system is centrally maintained to provide up-to-date versions of all certificates and to prevent the issue of certificates as necessary when circumstances change. Each certificate bears a unique serial number which makes it traceable to the AHDO and to the certifying OV.

Who signs the certificates?

OVs may be Veterinary Officers of Animal Health (AH), Official Veterinarians of the Meat Hygiene Service (referred to as OV(MHS)) or Local Veterinary Inspectors (LVIs). LVIs are private practitioners who are trained and authorised by the local Divisional Veterinary Manager (the head of the AHDO) to carry out work on behalf of Defra. Before being able to sign export health certificates, the OV must have undergone training by Animal Health and been appointed to the appropriate export 'panel', depending on the type of export work the Official Veterinarian wishes to undertake (i.e. by category such as livestock, poultry, hatching eggs or fresh meat). Similar arrangements exist in Northern Ireland.

Legislation

Council Directive 96/93/EC lays down the principles of veterinary certification throughout the EU and focuses on the integrity of veterinary certification at the premises of manufacture and dispatch e.g. *'certifying officers must not certify data of which they have no personal knowledge or which cannot be ascertained by them'*.

In the UK, the regulatory body of the veterinary profession is the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). The RCVS produces a Guide to Professional Conduct and sets standards of professional conduct for veterinarians working in the UK. The RCVS [Twelve Principles of Certification](#) provide guidance to all veterinarians carrying out export work, which closely reflect the requirements of the EU Directive.

Control of the system

Each OV practice is visited periodically by Animal Health to ensure that the standing instructions are kept up to date and that any equipment required to carry out OV duties is serviceable. In addition, certificates issued by OVs are subject to audit by the Animal Health as part of the overall monitoring of OV performance. Failure to maintain a set of standing instructions or equipment may eventually result in the practice members being considered unsuitable for OV duties. In instances where the Animal Health considers that the OV infringes or fails to comply with his/her conditions of appointment or is not performing his/her duties satisfactorily, the OV may be suspended pending a final decision.

[Veterinary supervision in meat plants](#)

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has overall responsibility for regulation relating to food hygiene. Slaughterhouses, cutting plants and game handling establishments require veterinary control and must be approved by the FSA. Any co-located coldstores, minced meat, meat preparation or meat products establishments are also approved by the FSA. When stand-alone these establishments are approved by the Local Authority.

The Meat Hygiene Service (MHS) is responsible for enforcing implementation of food hygiene regulation in fresh meat premises once they have been approved by the FSA in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales). MHS provides audit verification of each premises' food safety management, based on the HACCP system in approved slaughterhouses, cutting plants, farmed and wild game facilities, and co-located meat and meat products premises. The [MHS Manual for Official Controls](#) gives detailed information on what their responsibilities are, how they are structured and how they carry out their work.

In Northern Ireland, the Department for Agriculture and Rural Development's (DARD) Veterinary Service provides meat inspection services on behalf of FSA (Northern Ireland).

[Pig Identification and Traceability](#)

Strict EU and domestic legislation governs the identification and movement of pigs. The [Defra website](#) provides extensive details of these rules.

Northern Ireland

Under the Aujeszky's Disease Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 1984 it is compulsory for any holding that keeps pigs to be registered with the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland.

The identification of the "holding of origin" of an animal's birth is a legal requirement under EU law. Each keeper of animals is required to advise DARDNI of the name and address of his holding, which is then identified by a unique identification number. DARDNI provides this number to the person in charge of the holding and requires it to be quoted in all official documents.

For Porcine and Ovine holdings the numbers are prefixed with the letters UK. These are followed by a number depending on the administrative region of Northern Ireland in which the herd/flock resides. Pigs are moved within the UK on movement documentation which is sent to the Competent Authority (DARDNI).

[Animal Disease situation in the UK](#)

Please refer to alternative Defra websites for details of [endemic animal disease surveillance](#) and [notifiable diseases](#) (including a list of occurrences in the UK). The [annual reports of the Chief Veterinary Officer](#) also give information on disease trends in the UK.

Veterinary surveillance in the UK

Please refer to alternative Defra website for details of [veterinary surveillance in the UK](#).

Disease control in the UK

Please refer to alternative Defra website detailing how the UK deals with [outbreaks of disease](#), including a list of [contingency plans](#).

Veterinary Health and Public Health Legislation

Animal Health

The Animal Health Act 1981 regulates the prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases.

The Act provides emergency powers for the control of exotic disease outbreaks and specific notifiable disease orders. When necessary there are powers to control other non-notifiable exotic or novel diseases.

The Act empowers Ministers to make Orders and Regulations covering all aspects of disease control including the following:

- eradication and prevention of disease
- dealing with an outbreak of disease
- powers of entry of veterinary inspectors and officers of the Minister
- seizure of infected animals
- slaughter and compensation
- disposal of infected carcasses
- cleansing and movement of animals, personnel and vehicles
- empowerment of Local Authorities and enforcement

Equivalent legislation is in place in Northern Ireland.

Public Health

Since 1 January 2006, new food hygiene regulations apply in all EU Member States. The new package simplifies and consolidates 17 food hygiene directives. As EU regulations, the legislation is directly applicable in the UK.

The regulations are:

- [Regulation \(EC\) 852/2004](#) on the hygiene of foodstuffs
- [Regulation \(EC\) 853/2004](#) laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin

- [Regulation \(EC\) 854/2004](#) laying down specific rules for the organisation of official controls on products of animal origin intended for human consumption

Related laws are:

- Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 laying down the general principles and requirements of food law, establishing the European Food Safety Authority and laying down procedures in matters of food safety.
- Directive 2002/99/EU laying down the animal health rules governing the production, processing, distribution and introduction of products of animal origin for human consumption, 16 December 2002.

The [Food Hygiene \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) provide the framework for the EU legislation to be enforced in England. There are similar regulations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

This domestic legislation broadly covers:

- offences, penalties and powers of entry
- revocation of existing implementing legislation
- enacting the national measures required or provided for in the EU regulations
- any consequential amendments (where the revocation of existing legislation requires changed references in other pieces of legislation)

Responsibility for the food hygiene regulations lies with the Food Standards Agency (FSA). FSA has produced the "[Guide to the Food Hygiene and Other Regulations for the Meat Industry](#)" which sets out the legal obligations that apply to food business operators in the meat sector and provides advice on how these obligations can be met. Operators are not obliged to follow the advice in the Guide as other ways of achieving compliance with the law may be equally valid. However the guidance sets out the sorts of activities which the FSA expects establishments to be following in order to meet the legislation outlined above.

Controls on veterinary medicines including vaccines

The safety, quality and efficacy of all aspects of veterinary medicines and vaccines in the UK are controlled by the [Veterinary Medicines Directorate](#). More information about the VMD's background and responsibilities is available at the website.

Legislation

The [Veterinary Medicines Regulations 2006](#) (as amended) sets out the legal and technical requirements for Marketing Authorisations for all veterinary medicinal products including foot-and-mouth disease vaccines. Under this UK legislation (and the EU regulations upon which it is based), no veterinary medicinal product may be marketed without a Marketing Authorisation, which is granted only after a detailed scientific assessment of the data relating to

safety, quality and efficacy. In addition, inspection of manufacturing premises is required to ensure that quality of the final product is assured.

The Suspected Adverse Reaction Surveillance Scheme (SARSS) is a national surveillance scheme run by the VMD to record and monitor reports of suspected adverse reactions to veterinary medicines in both animals and humans.

Veterinary Residue Surveillance

The [Veterinary Medicines Directorate](#) (VMD) carries out testing and surveillance for residues of veterinary and pharmacologically active compounds under both statutory and non-statutory [surveillance programmes](#).

National Surveillance Scheme (NSS)

The statutory programme, or National Surveillance Scheme (NSS) is carried out under Directive 96/23 on measures to monitor certain substances and residues thereof in live animals and animal products, which specifies the checks to be made and the substances to be tested for.

The programme covers red meat, poultry, salmon and trout, wild and farmed game, milk and honey. The NSS uses mainly samples collected from UK produced animals on farms and at egg packing stations and slaughtered animals on abattoirs. The programme is designed so that samples are taken from all registered abattoirs.

The annual testing plan is drawn up with input from various bodies and adopted by the EU's Standing Veterinary Committee.

Non-statutory programme

The non-statutory programme examines foods and residues that fall outside the NSS, including processed and imported produce. This provides additional safeguards and reassurance to consumers. The scheme is designed to complement the statutory programme, and extends to analyte/matrix combinations which it does not cover, principally imported and processed foods. Samples for the non-statutory programme are collected from a range of shops across the country and from Border Inspection Posts.

Organisations involved

Animal Health (AH) collect samples on farms in Great Britain and carries out follow-up visits where samples have been found to be above the relevant Maximum Residue Limit, or action level. In Northern Ireland, inspectors employed by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland's Veterinary Service collect samples from meat plants and farms.

Analytical methodologies used

All laboratories involved in analysing the samples are accredited and work to internationally recognised standards, use validated methods and routinely participate in proficiency testing programmes. They are subject to frequent

audit by accrediting bodies, the Food and Veterinary Office of the European Commission and an independent expert panel set up by the VMD.

Reporting

VMD publishes [quarterly reports](#) of its surveillance programmes in the Medicines Act Veterinary Information Service (MAVIS).