



Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

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Rt Hon Mr Alistair Carmichael MP
Chair
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

2 May 2025

Dear Mr Carmichael

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD & RURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO ANIMAL & PLANT HEALTH

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the EFRA inquiry into animal and plant health on 4 March 2025. There were a number of questions some aspects of which we agreed to take away as we did not have detailed information on this at the time. Our responses are provided below.

Response to Foot & Mouth Disease (FMD) in Germany

You asked us to confirm the date when the Import of Plants, Animals, Food and Feed System (IPAFFS) was updated. We can now confirm that took place on 16 January 2025. Although, as the UK CVO stated in the inquiry, she asked Border Control Posts (BCPs) on 10 January 2025 to hold goods from Germany pending compliance checks.

The Committee also asked about the quantity of prohibited goods that entered the country between controls being imposed and IPAFFS being updated. As above, a system of manual holds was put in place on the day Germany confirmed FMD, before IPAFFS was updated, to mitigate this risk. BCP officials carried out documentary checks on all goods in scope of the regulations (identified by origin country and commodity code) from 10 January 2025, the date of Germany's confirmation. These checks were to determine whether consignments from Germany were compliant, with sufficient evidence that the goods had been subject to acceptable mitigating treatments. Non-compliance data is held at BCP/local authority level. We do not hold this information centrally. As of 02/05/2025 we have received a response

from most PHAs. This includes a response from Ashford PHA for goods moving through Sevington BCP. Based on this data we have been able to identify three consignments that did auto clear that should have been detained at the border. These consignments were referred by PHAs to inland Local Authorities for further action to prevent them entering wider circulation.

With regards to the reference the Committee made to an unverified report of German whey product found inland, we can confirm that no one has raised this with us directly for investigation. FMD restrictions do apply to dairy products imported from Germany which have not been subject to an acceptable mitigating treatment in article 4 of assimilated Regulation 605/2010 [ovs-note-2025-09.pdf](#). This would include whey.

Veterinary shortages

The Committee queried difficulties regarding veterinary workforce shortages and the challenges this poses to our ability to respond to diseases. As of November 2023, there were 30,102 practicing veterinary surgeons registered with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) in the UK. The Committee referred to the Chief Veterinary Officer's evidence to the former EFRA Committee on 12 March 2024, referring to a veterinary workforce shortage figure of 11%. This figure was derived from a combination of surveys and data analysis conducted by the RCVS.

However, the RCVS workforce modelling report (2024) indicates that the supply of vets in clinical practice is projected to increase from 91% of total demand in 2023 to nearly 99% by 2035. This suggests a recovery in the number of private vets.

However, this report also highlights that government veterinary roles, particularly those in public health and regulatory positions, are facing more significant and persistent shortages.

Defra appreciates the incredibly valuable work completed by all veterinarians and recognise their essential role in achieving our ambitious goals of upholding high standards of animal welfare, supporting trade, and safeguarding public health and food security. The Government acknowledges the high demand for veterinary services and is working collaboratively across departments and with the profession to explore measures that will ensure sufficient staffing levels to support and sustain the sector.

Avian Influenza

The Committee asked how frequently we publish data about the number of birds compulsorily culled due to Avian Influenza. We can confirm that these data are not routinely published.

We can confirm that the Animal and Plant Health Agency culled 28 infected premises (IPs) between 1 October 2024 and 2 February 2025. Of these, 27 IPs were eligible for compensation totalling, £11,232,962.82, which has been paid out. An additional disputed valuation payment has been paid out to one of these IPs totalling £28,596.46. There is also one outstanding compensation payment to be paid totalling £194,496.78. Therefore, we can confirm, the total compensation payable for the 27 IPs is £11,456,056.06. The total number of birds eligible for compensation from the 27 IPs is 2,059,379.

The Section 80 report for 2024 under the Animal Health Act 1981 includes details of compensation paid for animals slaughtered to prevent the spread of animal diseases, including Avian Influenza. www.gov.uk/government/publications/section-80-report-for-2024-under-the-animal-health-act-1981

We will look in future to publish data on the number of birds that die or are culled on Avian Influenza affected farms.

Yours sincerely



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UK Chief Veterinary Officer



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