



MEETING	ADVISORY COMMITTEE
DATE	25 SEPTEMBER 2008
TITLE	CERTIFICATION SUB-COMMITTEE
CLASSIFICATION	Unclassified
SUMMARY	To consider the Report of the Certification Sub-Committee detailing those matters upon which the Sub-Committee has been asked to comment
DECISIONS REQUIRED	NONE
ATTACHMENTS	Annex A – report of certification meeting
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CERTIFICATION SUB COMMITTEE REPORT TO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Movement of rodents under A(SPA)

1. The Sub-Committee was asked to give an opinion on wording of a certificate for movement of animals undergoing regulated procedures from a designated establishment in the UK. The NVS is required to certify that the animals will not suffer if they are moved from the designated establishment. The form of words had met the approval of the Home Office.
2. The Sub-Committee agreed that the wording was generally acceptable, with a slight change one colloquial phrase, which it was deemed was not appropriate for official certificates.

Assured British Pigs Certificate

3. The Sub-Committee were asked to review a Quarterly Veterinary Report form sent by Assured British Pigs earlier this year, and made suggestions for minor changes. The Assured British Pigs Board sent through another draft of this certificate for the Sub-Committee to consider.
4. The Sub-Committee were of the opinion that this change would work well in the field. There were, however, a few comments made by the Sub-Committee. Firstly relating to the retrospective nature of one of the sections that the farmer must sign; it was thought that it was better to get the farmer to sign for compliance in the future. Second, one section required the veterinary surgeon to sign that they had not 'seen' evidence of pain or distress; it was thought that the word could rather be along the lines of 'found' or the equivalent. This was because it is not just visible evidence that could apply, for example any noxious smell/atmosphere could be relevant.

Scottish Agricultural College Sheep and Goat Health Scheme

5. The Scottish Agricultural College enquired as to the acceptability of electronic Health Status Reports being made available to their members through a secure, password protected website.
6. The Sub-Committee were of the opinion that the suggestion of electronic Health Status Reports was fine and commented that this appears to be an extension of how some practices are now receiving lab reports and that they could be used for further certification.

Bluetongue Vaccination

7. The Sub-Committee has been in correspondence with DEFRA regarding blue tongue certification and in particular movement within Great Britain. This culminated in an article in RCVS News, which was later corrected slightly, stating that vaccination for regulated movement from the English and Welsh Protection Zones into a free area in England and Wales, may be administered by the farmer and that at the time of vaccination, a record should be made of the

animals' identification marks, the number of animals vaccinated should correspond with the quantity of vaccination used and the farmer should present the veterinary surgeon with a list of animals vaccinated and the empty vaccine bottles, with labels and batch numbers legible. The prescribing veterinary surgeon can then sign the relevant part of the certificate to say the vaccine was prescribed and the correct number of empty bottles returned, and the farmer makes a declaration that he or she vaccinated the animals.'

8. It went on to say that the requirements for movement into Scotland are currently the same as for 'vaccination for export', i.e. the veterinary surgeon must administer the vaccine and the animals' identification numbers must be recorded at the time of vaccination. If an export is planned, the official export certificate may be used. If export is only a possibility for the future, the farmer may request a separate vaccination certificate. Certification is required only for the movement from a Protection Zone into a free area or Surveillance Zone, movement within the Protection Zone itself is unrestricted.
9. DEFRA inform the College that they are filtering any relevant information to the devolved administrations.

Meeting between RCVS and DEFRA

10. In July 2008 a meeting took place between RCVS and DEFRA to discuss certification issues. A note of this meeting is attached as Annex A.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

CERTIFICATION SUB-COMMITTEE, BVA, & DEFRA

NOTE OF MEETING ON TUESDAY 20 JUNE 2006 at 10.00 AM

PRESENT:

RCVS: Mr P Jinman (Chairman)
Mrs J Nute

DEFRA: Mr S Hall
Mr K Patel
Dr H Elliott
Mr M Lopez

Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA): Mr A Wear

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss L Evans

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies were received from Dr Barry Johnson.

INTRODUCTION

2. The Chairman opened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves.

Report of the previous meeting

3. The report of the previous meeting on 20 June 2006 was noted. There were no matters arising.

Lay TB Testing

4. A question was raised by RCVS as to any development in this area. In particular there were concerns surrounding signature by a veterinary surgeon when a lay person had carried out the test; on the TB form, the veterinary officer signs on behalf of a lay person that the animal is healthy.
5. It was noted by DEFRA that there is not any further news on this matter. Clarification of the current situation was given; testing of animals for international trade has to be carried out by the official veterinarian, although the holding itself may be declared free of TB under domestic procedures.
6. It was noted that the TB 52 form can lead to potential issues in that it states 'I clinically inspected animals...' but that there is also a form that lay testers are able to sign.
7. It was noted that there is a need to be clear about the TB free status of a herd.

8. Another issue was raised in relation to TB testing. It was noted that on the TB 52 form, there is an assumption that one veterinary surgeon has done both days of the test for the one animal.
9. It was noted that it could be the case that with some bigger herds, the farmer wants all the testing to be done in one day and so more than one veterinary surgeon could be doing the work, but only one veterinary surgeon signing the certificate. It was asked whether there could be a change in the forms and guidance to allow two veterinary surgeons to do the testing.
10. It was noted that clear guidance was required and that it should be that whoever does the work signs the forms.
11. It was suggested that there could therefore be two forms to sign, this would then be consistent with the 12 principles of certification, which say that a veterinary surgeon may only certify as to what is within his or her knowledge.
12. It was noted that there could not be two separate signatures on the same form, for 'tested by...' and 'read by...', it would have to be the same veterinary surgeon to do the test, read the result and then sign the forms.
13. It was decided that possible change to forms and guidance would be pursued by DEFRA.

RCVS guidance and general discussion of certification

14. The general discussion of the principles of certification within the Guide to Professional Conduct and a new advice note recently published by the Professional Conduct department was introduced.
15. It was further noted by the RCVS that veterinary surgeons putting their professional name to certificates is important and that a relatively high number of complaints on this matter progress to a disciplinary hearing. It was thought that the situation is not helped if the person signing cannot understand the form, or if it does not meet the requirements of the 12 principles of certification.
16. It was noted by DEFRA that many people at the meeting are the day to day guardians of the principles of certification and that the 12 principles have been adopted across Europe as a blueprint for international trade certificates.
17. It was commented by DEFRA that the phrase 'to the best of my knowledge and belief' is not very helpful, but is slipping back into certificates. It is important to look to the '4 Cs' of certification and the guidance document with the certificate before signing.
18. It was noted by the RCVS that the phrase 'to the best of my knowledge and belief' does not comply with the 12 principles of certification and is used when the veterinary surgeon is not, or cannot be, sure of a fact.

Effect of devolution on certification requirements

19. It was noted that the meeting in March 2008 on Blue Tongue certification was useful, but that the differences in the certification requirements for movement to Wales and Scotland have not sufficiently filtered down to the profession.
20. It was noted that the devolved administrations are likely to diverge on animal health policy, and a question arose as to whether Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish representatives should be invited to this meeting.
21. DEFRA explained that when they negotiate certificates for international trade, then they are for the whole of the UK, not just England, and that items for this meeting are, on the whole, relating to international matters.
22. It was noted that if there were agenda items affecting, or of interest to the devolved administrations then they could be invited.
23. It was noted that guidance notes are incredibly useful but that it is beneficial to produce a clean and clear certificate at the outset. RCVS is happy to assist organisations involved in the drafting of certificates in order to assist its members. It may be necessary to point out to all, devolved administrations, Meat Hygiene Service etc that the Certification Sub-Committee actual exists and is available for consultation.
24. It was suggested that, particularly with Blue Tongue, certification requirements can become complicated. It would be relatively easy, for example, for a farmer to get the incorrect blue Tongue Certificate or for the animal to end up being triple vaccinated. It is in these situations when the guidance document is important, though they can sometimes be rather lengthy. It is hoped that the Blue Tongue situation will become clearer as the whole country will be on the same level.
25. It was accepted that DEFRA are filtering down information to the devolved administrations, and will continue to do so.

Electronic Certification

26. RCVS stated that, in the past, paper copies of certificates had always been relied upon, but that this situation was now changing and moving towards electronic certificates.
27. It was noted that electronic certification can be done with as much, if not more, security and safety as paper certification.
28. DEFRA presented their propositions for electronic certification, with clarification in the footer that the certificate can be done electronically.
29. The RCVS commented that this is the future of certification and was acceptable if safe and secure; with clear authentication that the certificate is 'DEFRA approved'.

30. DEFRA made two further points. First that with many veterinary practices being linked to the internet, electronic certification can make for a speedier customer service, and that there will come a point where electronic certification will be the norm.
31. Second that DEFRA want the electronic certificates to be credible, with as much security in place as possible. There has to be an agreed standard logo, or something similar, to show that the certificate and laboratory and results are export approved.
32. RCVS commented that clarity is required in all aspects of electronic certification, how are the required electronics to be used in the field? How is the veterinary signature going to be applied to the certificate?
33. DEFRA noted that with the TRACES system animals could be sent with just a code and the certificate is signed with a password, similar to chip and pin banking. Brazil was used as an example. All authentic certificates have a unique 32 digit code, this certificate can then be checked against a database to ensure it is not a duplicate or forgery.
34. DEFRA further noted that as LVIs all have their own number already, this would not be difficult to implement more widely.
35. It was noted that this issue will be followed with interest by all.

Intra-community trade of registered equidae

36. It was noted that this issue has been ongoing for many years and the declaration circulated before the meeting, and attached as annex a, was a second draft.
37. RCVS commented that in 'note 1' the use of the word 'residence' could cause confusion as not all animals coming into contact with the stables would be residents. The RCVS preferred the wording 'during the time the animal has spent on the above premises'.
38. RCVS commented, in relation to (c) on the form, that it would be almost inevitable that the horse would have been exposed to other equidae suffering from an infectious or contagious diseases in the preceding 15 days and that veterinary surgeons would therefore be reluctant to sign.
39. DEFRA noted that in an EU context, 'disease' was understood as 'diseases included in Directive 82/894 to which the species is susceptible' and that paragraph (c) of the declaration as well as the notes for guidance will be amended to reflect this.
40. It was commented that if all horses have a passport, the certificate will not need to even exist, and that this certificate may become obsolete in the future.
41. The notes for guidance and the declaration is to be amended by DEFRA.

Scrapie monitoring for intra-Community trade

42. It was noted that EU Rules had recently changed and that there is a transition period of three years in which all fallen stock over 18 months old must be tested for Scrapie. It had been found, however, that not all were admitting to having had deaths on their holdings.
43. The Guidance was sent to the Certification Sub-Committee and it was requested that it was added to. DEFRA stated that they have fine tuned it as much as possible but that now the Scottish Agricultural College have taken over this demanding scheme.
44. It was noted that there is a requirement to have the appropriate training and knowledge to be part of the scheme, and that regular retraining is also required. It was suggested that if the 12 principles of certification were being re-written then there could be an obligation to have the appropriate training for the certification being undertaken.
45. The RCVS noted that the Guide to Professional Conduct already states that a veterinary surgeon should not stray outside their sphere of competence, but that further discussion on a requirement for the appropriate knowledge base could occur.

Date of the next meeting

46. It was noted that a date of 9 June 2009 had been suggested for the next meeting, but that if anything arises beforehand, an earlier meeting could be arranged.