



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Animal Health and Welfare Pathway – Mandatory Proposals

Consultation on proposed legislation to mandate the requirement for an annual Animal Health and Welfare Review and endemic disease eradication programmes

February 2026

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Overview

Our vision for the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway

We are consulting on proposals designed to introduce a new phase in the [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway](#), facilitating collaboration between farmers and vets to enhance livestock health, welfare and biosecurity. Many farmers are already taking positive measures across these areas during the voluntary funded phase, and they are realising the benefits. From the conception of the Pathway, we have talked about transition from a voluntary funded system to a mandatory one, which will protect the investments made in the voluntary phase and ensure that farms are working to the same minimum standards, such as an annual vet visit. Proposals have been designed to give farmers and vets the flexibility to take steps that are tailored for each individual farm, maximising the benefits of healthier, higher-welfare, and more productive animals at both a local and national level.

Implications of EU Reset

As announced at the UK-EU Leaders' Summit on May 19 2025, the UK and EU have agreed to work towards a common Sanitary and Phytosanitary Area, by way of an EU-UK Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement (SPS Agreement) which should ensure the application of the same rules in the EU and Great Britain through the application of the EU's sanitary rules in Great Britain. This means that the EU's Animal Health Regulation (EU) 2016/429 (Animal Health Law) would be applicable in Great Britain and farmers in England (as well as in Wales and Scotland) would be required to comply with the rules in the Animal Health Law.

The proposals in this consultation have been designed to sit alongside the proposed SPS Agreement and assume that the Animal Health Law would be applicable in Great Britain by virtue of the proposed SPS agreement.

The vet visit under the Animal Health Law will require vet advice and discussion in the following areas:

- Animal health
- Biosecurity
- Disease incursions

The regularity of the visit under the Animal Health Law will be determined once the law is implemented.

Purpose of this consultation

This consultation is about the measures we are seeking to introduce which are beyond the requirements set out in Article 25 of the Animal Health Law. This includes requirements for some farmers to also review animal health, welfare, create flock health plans for sheep and participate in disease control and eradication programmes for pigs and cattle. The proposals to introduce a flock health plan for sheep and eradication programmes for pigs and cattle fall outside the scope of the Animal Health Law.

These proposals build on the progress made by the existing, [voluntary and funded service](#) which is part of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway.

This is an England only consultation. The specific requirements proposed in this consultation will have effect only in England. These rules do not affect farmers whose registered base is outside England.

Audience

Anyone may respond to the consultation. Those who may have a particular interest include:

- farming organisations and trade bodies
- cattle, sheep and pig farmers
- the veterinary profession
- farm assurance schemes
- academic institutions
- animal welfare organisations
- public sector regulators and enforcers
- processing plants
- livestock transporters
- livestock markets
- deadstock disposal businesses

How to respond

Please respond to this consultation using the [Defra Citizen Space Consultation hub](#).

If you are unable to use Citizen Space, you can download the consultation documents and return your response via email to AHWP-Mandatory@defra.gov.uk or via post to: Universal Participation Team, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Seacole Building 2nd Floor, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF.

The consultation will run for 12 weeks. The consultation opens on 24th February 2026 and closes at 23:59 on 18th May 2026. Any responses received after this date will not be analysed.

Other information

This consultation is being conducted in line with the [Cabinet Office “Consultation Principles”](#)

Introduction

The [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway](#) was launched in 2023 to deliver a number of enhancements to the health, welfare and biosecurity of farm animals in England. Currently, the Animal Health and Welfare Review and endemic disease follow-up elements of the Pathway operate on a voluntary basis and there is funding available for eligible farmers of cattle, sheep and pigs to carry out a range of activities on their farms. These existing services and the proposals outlined in this consultation have been the product of a collaborative process called co-design involving farmers, vets and government working in partnership to develop government policy.

Currently, farmers with 11 or more cattle, 51 or more pigs and 21 or more sheep can apply for funding for a visit from the vet who keeps those keepers’ animals under their care once a year, called the Animal Health and Welfare Review (AHWR). The need for the AHWR was identified across multiple farming sectors, through engagement with representatives of the farming industry. Many farmers are already benefiting from regular interaction with their vet, whether through routine visits, assurance scheme membership, participation in disease control programmes or veterinary attestation visits. The AHWR supports farmers to proactively engage with their vet on a regular basis and gets more vets on farms to offer health and welfare expertise. The visit takes the form of a discussion between the vet and the farmer, alongside provision of bespoke veterinary advice on any health or welfare topic, supporting farmers in achieving better outcomes for their animals.

There is also funding available to target priority endemic diseases in these animals. For cattle, the current target disease is Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) and for pigs it is Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS), selected due to their high impacts on the sectors. BVD is estimated to cost the cattle sector £14 million to £36 million each year, and PRRS costs the pig sector an estimated £52 million each year.¹

¹ [Animal Health and Welfare Pathway - GOV.UK](#)

The funding currently available aims to strengthen relationships and knowledge sharing between farmers and vets and make progress in tackling these costly diseases. To ensure that lasting benefits are seen from the actions being funded, we are proposing legislation in addition to the vet visit required by the EU Animal Health Law. This legislation would supplement the requirements in Article 25 of the Animal Health Law and require farmers of cattle, sheep and pigs to have an annual AHWR with their vet to review the health and welfare of their animals and discuss overall farm biosecurity and responsible use of medicines. The AHWR goes beyond the requirements of most farm assurance schemes.

For sheep farmers, we propose to introduce a mandatory flock health plan, developed by farmers alongside their vet. This is designed to encourage a proactive approach to anticipating and planning for health, welfare and biosecurity issues in flocks. It would assist farmers in tackling a wide range of issues that sheep can face, including internal and external parasites and the growing challenge of wormer resistance.

We also propose the introduction of mandatory disease eradication programmes for Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) and Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS). This would ensure that all farms are working together to reduce the spread and impact of these diseases, supporting those farmers already undertaking measures to protect their animals. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have already introduced a mandatory approach to the eradication of BVD, along with several countries on the European continent, such as Denmark and Sweden. These programmes have made notable progress, with BVD prevalence in Northern Ireland falling by 70%². A mandatory approach to PRRS control is also happening in Europe, including programmes in Hungary and Denmark. Taking a mandatory approach to PRRS control would reduce the high costs burdening the pig sector and encourage a co-ordinated effort to reduce the spread of the virus.

These proposals contribute to the delivery of key public goods such as enhanced animal health and welfare, reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, slowing the rise of anti-microbial resistance and enhanced resilience against future disease outbreaks within the farming sector.

The following sections of this consultation set out the proposals in greater detail along with questions to gather your views on each element.

Using and sharing your information

² [Muir welcomes measures to support the eradication of Bovine Viral Diarrhoea \(BVD\) | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

To find out how we use your personal data, read the [consultation and call for evidence exercise privacy notice](#)

About you or your organisation

Question 1 a. Would you like your response to be treated as confidential (required)?

Yes – No

Question 1 b. If yes, please give your reason(s)

[Free text]

Question 2. What is your name?

[Free text]

Question 3. What is your email address?

[Free text]

Question 4. Are you responding as an organisation or an individual? (Select one option only)

Individual – You are responding with your personal views, rather than as an official representative of a business, business association or other organisation

Organisation – You are responding in an official capacity as a representative of a business, business association or other organisation

Question 5. If you are responding as an organisation in Question 4, what is the name of your organisation?

[Free text]

Question 6. If you are responding as an organisation in Question 4, where does your organisation operate? Please select all that apply

Please select: England – Scotland – Wales – Northern Ireland – EU (please specify which countries you operate in) – Rest of world (please specify which countries you operate in)

Question 7. If you are responding as an individual in Question 4, where are you based in the UK? (Select one option only)

England – Scotland – Wales – Northern Ireland – Not UK Based (please specify)

Question 8. Which of the following best describes your role? Please select all relevant options

- Academic

- Animal welfare organisation
- Cattle farmer
- Consumer
- Farm assurance scheme
- Farming organisation or trade body
- Local authority (LA)
- Pig farmer
- Retailer
- Sector trade body or membership organisation
- Sheep farmer
- Veterinary Surgeon
- Livestock haulier
- Livestock auctioneer
- Livestock breeder
- Livestock dealer
- Artificial insemination centre or service
- Meat processing organisation
- Farm advisor
- Suitably qualified person
- Other - please specify [Open box for response]

Question 9. If you are a farmer (cattle, sheep or pigs) have you applied for or received funding under the Pathway?

Yes – Prefer not to say - No

Question 10. If you are a sheep farmer, are you conducting any flock health planning?

Yes – Prefer not to say - No

Proposals for public consultation

The introduction of a mandatory Animal Health and Welfare Review (AHWR)

The voluntary AHWR was initially launched as a voluntary funded programme in February 2023. We propose to replace the voluntary programme with legal requirements which would make it mandatory for cattle, sheep and pig farmers in England to arrange a visit from their vet to carry out an annual review. Farmers would have the flexibility to organise the visit to carry out this mandatory review at any point in the year that best suits them.

Some farm assurance schemes currently accept a voluntary review vet visit towards or instead of one of their required vet visits.

The aims of the mandatory AHWR are to:

- assist in the identification, control and reduction of disease spread.
- encourage regular engagement between farmers and vets.
- assist keepers in understanding and enhancing the health and welfare of their animals.
- provide information to Defra about the health and welfare status of the national herds and flock.
- improve productivity.
- reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions per unit of production, as healthier animals are more productive and require fewer resources.
- promote responsible and appropriate use of medicines; and
- slow the rise of anti-microbial resistance.

Farmers would also be required to provide some information on health, welfare and medicine usage to Defra which will support the above objectives and deliver a more comprehensive picture of health and welfare across the national herd/flock. Information would need to be submitted online, and Defra would seek to minimise reporting burden on farmers through avoiding duplication wherever possible and exploring options for integration with existing software and data collection programmes already in use on farms. When information from the mandatory schemes is shared with the Secretary of State for Defra, they can nominate others, including arm's length bodies or other organisations to collect data on their behalf.

Some of the information provided would be made available to registered users of a secure online movements database. Access to this information would enable farmers and vets to have informed conversations and identify areas of focus on their individual farms, through benchmarking against other farms of a similar type, and could also offer potential benefits when buying or selling animals by providing greater transparency and confidence in herd or flock health status.

To support vets in conducting annual reviews, guidance would be developed for each species and production type, offering direction where needed. This guidance would provide recommendations on best practice rather than a compulsory checklist, allowing the vet and farmer to discuss the most pressing and relevant topics for each farm. The vet would provide recommendations to the farmer verbally during the review and in writing following the visit. Defra would not see the report or the recommendations but would be notified that the visit had taken place and the written report had been provided to the farmer.

Proposals for the mandatory AHWR have been co-designed with relevant stakeholders, including the farming trade bodies, vets and farmers, which include the principles of the review and topics to be discussed during the visit. To minimise the burden on smaller keepers we are proposing minimum numbers of animals, under which there would not be

a requirement for an annual review, above the requirements set out in the Animal Health Law.

Outline of the proposed mandatory AHWR

By aligning with rules in the Animal Health Law under the proposed SPS Agreement, livestock keepers in England would be required to comply with the obligations set out in Article 25 of the Animal Health Law. This would mean that every livestock keeper would be required to ensure that their establishments receive animal health visits from a vet based on the risks posed by the establishment in question, taking into account various factors, such as species, type of establishment and surveillance. In addition to this, every livestock keeper with 51 or more pigs, 11 or more cattle, or 101 or more sheep on their holding at any single point over the year must:

- arrange and undergo an annual visit with a vet of their choice, focused on animal health, welfare, biosecurity and medicine use
- provide some information on health, welfare and medicine usage to Defra
- sheep keepers must also produce a flock health plan with their vet

Information to be provided for all species:

- species
- location
- numbers of animals
- farm structure/type of production system
- assurance/accreditation scheme membership
- confirmed and suspected diseases on farm
- antibiotic, wormer and vaccine use

Additional cattle-specific information:

- mastitis rates (dairy only)
- mobility rates
- mortality and survival rates at birth and weaning
- conception rates and number carried to full term

Additional sheep-specific information:

- mortality rates for ewes
- lamb rearing percentage

Additional pig-specific information:

- mortality and survival rates at birth, weaning and finishing
- lameness rates in finishing pigs

We are proposing that the information on antibiotic, anthelmintic and vaccine use should be provided at a herd or flock-level, with a small number of exceptions. Anthelmintic data will be used at an aggregated level by Defra.

As part of the disease eradication programmes, we propose that BVD vaccination records should be shared at point of sale for individual cattle and PRRS vaccination records should be shared at point of sale for individually identified breeding sows and boars. This is important for interpretation of disease test results and to facilitate knowledge-based trading. Individual and herd level BVD status determined as part of the mandatory BVD eradication programme will contribute to the overall health picture in the case of cattle. Vaccine information would be available to registered users of the secure movements database and be shown at point of sale. Knowing the vaccine and disease status of animals you are about to purchase can inform buying choices and make sure farmers are not bringing animals that have been dosed with different vaccines, or non-vaccinated animals, onto their farms. Vaccine information for non-breeding pigs would be shared at a batch level at point of sale.

In addition, we propose that antibiotic usage information for cattle should be provided on an individual basis, given the lower likelihood of whole-herd dosing for this species, the enhanced level of individual tracing available, and the benefits to knowledge-based trading. When buying cattle, it can be useful to know whether the animal is under meat or milk withdrawal periods for antibiotics. Herd level antibiotic usage is also a useful tool for buyers in understanding high and low levels of usage on farms.

We are proposing that antibiotic usage in other species is recorded at a herd or flock level.

The purpose of gathering information on medicine usage is to allow informed conversations between farmers and vets, supported by benchmarking, and to facilitate informed livestock purchasing decisions. The information is not intended to be used for the purposes of enforcing how or when medicines are used.

Questions on the mandatory Animal Health and Welfare Review (AHWR)

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

Question 11 a. For cattle, a mandatory AWHR in England should be introduced, in addition to the animal health visit requirements in the Animal Health Law.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 11 b. For sheep, A mandatory AWHR in England should be introduced, in addition to the animal health visit requirements in the Animal Health Law.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 11 c. For pigs, a mandatory AWHR in England should be introduced, in addition to the animal health visit requirements in the Animal Health Law.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 11 d. If you have answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to any of the questions above, please explain why

Free text

Question 12 a. Farms with fewer than 11 cattle should be exempt from the mandatory AHWR, which is over and above the animal health visit required by the Animal Health Law.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 12 b. Farms with fewer than 101 sheep should be exempt from the mandatory AHWR, which is over and above the animal health visit required by the Animal Health Law.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 12 c. Farms with fewer than 51 pigs should be exempt from the mandatory AHWR, which is over and above the animal health visit required by the Animal Health Law.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 12 d. If you have answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree” to any of the questions above, please explain why

Free text

Question 13 a. As part of the AHWR, there should be a requirement to provide some information to Defra on (select all that apply)

- Health
- Welfare
- Antibiotic usage
- Vaccine usage

- Anthelmintic (wormer) usage
- None of the above
- Other

Question 13 b. If you have selected “none of the above” or “other”, please specify which information should be provided.

Question 14 a. Some information on the following topics should be accessible to registered users of the secure movements database at an aggregated level for benchmarking purposes and to facilitate greater transparency when buying and selling animals.

(Please select all that apply)

- Health (aggregated basis for benchmarking)
- Welfare (aggregated basis for benchmarking)
- Antibiotic usage (farm level for sheep and pigs and on an individual basis for cattle)
- Vaccine usage (including at an individual animal level for BVD, and at an individual level for PRRS in breeding pigs or a batch level for non-breeding pigs)
- Anthelmintic (wormer) usage (aggregated basis for benchmarking)
- None of the above

Question 14 b. Please share any additional comments you may have on the specific information which is proposed to be shared with Defra for each species.

Free text

The introduction of a mandatory annual flock health plan

Alongside the introduction of the mandatory AHWR, for sheep farmers in England we propose the introduction of a mandatory annual flock health plan. This may happen at the same time as the AHWR, or during a separate visit if preferred. As with the AHWR, this would only be required for flocks of 101 or more sheep.

The flock health plan would be developed together by the farmer and their vet, reviewing the previous year’s health and productivity and coming up with a plan for the following year. It would allow the flexibility to create a bespoke path for each farm to drive improvements to overall flock health, whilst also offering a holistic approach to tackling a range of issues facing sheep farmers across England.

Flock health plan templates with detailed advice and guidance would be provided for both farmers and vets. We propose that biosecurity, infectious disease priorities and a discussion about flock health and performance should form part of all plans. Suggested

additional topics may be included on an individual farm basis including lambing, tupping, weaning, cull sheep, disease action planning and preventative treatments.

Each flock health plan would also contain a parasite control plan to tackle production-limiting internal and external parasites. The parasite control plan would record actions taken and treatment given. For internal parasites, we propose it would include names and types of wormers used, timings of treatment, parasites targeted, whether pre- and post-worming treatment checks have been carried out, and records of any wormer resistance. For external parasites, we are proposing that the action (including parasite targeted) and medicines or preventative treatments used are recorded. We are proposing that the contents of the parasite control plan would be reported to Defra.

The section of the flock health plan that covers biosecurity, infectious disease priorities and flock health and performance would remain between the farmer and the vet.

Questions on the mandatory annual flock health plan

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

Question 15 a. A mandatory annual flock health plan should be introduced for sheep in England.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 15 b. If you have answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, please explain why

Free text

Question 16 a. Farms with fewer than 101 sheep should be exempted from carrying out a flock health plan.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 16 b. If you have answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, please explain why

Free text

Question 17 a. The following topics should be required elements in the Flock Health Plan

Select all that apply

- Biosecurity
- Infectious disease priorities
- Flock health performance
- None of the above
- Other

Question 17 b. If you have selected “none of the above” or “other” please explain why and specify any additional topics that you think should be required.

Free Text

Question 18 There should be a requirement for a parasite control plan to be included as part of the flock health plan.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 19 a. There should be a requirement to share data from the parasite control plan with Defra for the purposes of improving knowledge of wormer effectiveness nationally.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 19 b. Data from the parasite control plan should be made available in aggregated form to registered users of the secure movements database for benchmarking purposes.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

The introduction of a mandatory Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) eradication programme

The eradication of BVD would result in a national herd with a higher standard of animal welfare, a lower cost of production, a reduced environmental footprint and be an asset when negotiating trade deals in future, such as when implementing Article 31(2) of the Animal Health Law. The aims of the proposed eradication programme are to:

- improve the health and welfare of English cattle herds
- improve the productivity of English cattle herds
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cattle
- reduce the use of antibiotics through fewer BVD-related health issues
- help build strong relationships between farmers and vets
- improve ability to demonstrate disease status when trading in Great Britain

- align BVD eradication with Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland where possible

The design of the programme is based on five simple principles:

1. Know your BVD status
2. Share your BVD status
3. Do not move persistently infected (PI) animals, unless directly to slaughter
4. Remove PI animals from your herd as soon as possible
5. Protect your livestock by having a biosecurity plan

The programme would introduce legislation requiring all bovine herds in England to carry out testing to determine their BVD status. Farmers and vets will have a range of testing options to choose from. They could use tag and testing of all newborn animals and/or check testing a sample of animals from different management groups on farm. Testing would need to be done on an annual basis as a minimum and may be performed using an antibody blood test or bulk milk testing if a management group is made up of milking cows. Farmers could work with their vet to determine the most appropriate testing for their herd. All aborted fetuses or calves born dead would need to be tested for virus using tag and test or tissue sampling.

All test results would be required to be submitted to Defra by either the vet or the lab, within 7 days of the test taking place. Results must be attributed to an official ear tag number. In the case of a bulk milk test, the result must be attributed to all animals that contributed to the tank that the sample was taken from. This would allow us to improve estimates of the prevalence of BVD in the English herd and monitor the progress of the programme. Samples would need to be tested at a laboratory that is UKAS accredited to ISO/IEC 17025 standards for the type of testing being done.

Farms testing positive for BVD antibodies would be required to conduct further virus testing to identify PI animals. This involves all animals on the holding having a blood test to identify BVD virus, known as a 'PI hunt'. This further testing would need to commence within 30 calendar days of the positive antibody result. Once the testing process has commenced, it must be completed within 7 calendar days. This would minimise the risks associated with undetected PIs moving off the farm before testing is complete. In addition, all calves born would need to be tag and tested until the farm has at least 12 months without identifying a PI.

An exception to this requirement for further virus testing may be made in cases where a BVD-vaccinated animal has tested positive for BVD antibodies and the herd is not showing any other symptoms of BVD. This exception is at the discretion of the vet. It will be up to individual livestock keepers to decide whether BVD vaccination forms part of their disease control approach, and this decision can be taken in conjunction with their vet. If vaccination is carried out, details of the vaccine used would need to be shared with Defra at an individual animal level, to facilitate knowledge-based trading and interpretation of disease test results.

Any farms that test positive for virus would be placed under a movement restriction until any PI animals are identified and removed from the farm. Until the removal of the PI, animals could only leave the farm to move directly to slaughter, or alternatively they could be culled on farm. They would not be permitted to go via a red market and should not be mixed with any other cattle going anywhere other than straight to an abattoir. The farm of birth of a PI animal must conduct a PI hunt if this has not been done since the birth of the animal and the dam of the PI animal must be virus tested to determine whether they themselves are a PI.

From the second year of the eradication programme, BVD status would have to be declared and displayed at the point of sale for both individual animals and at herd level. BVD status would also be made available to view on the secure movements database, by registered users of the database. This would allow farmers and vets to benchmark their progress and facilitate knowledge-based trading. This follows a similar approach to that taken by neighbouring countries, such as the Scottish 'BVD Lookup' service.

We propose a system of different herd-level statuses to help distinguish progress being made in BVD eradication efforts. They are organised as follows:

- Negative: herds who have tested negative at their most recent round of testing and have completed 12 months of check testing, including a minimum of two calving cycles OR 24 months of tag and test (via official tags only). Farms with a previously earned negative BVD status through approved schemes such as CHeCs or the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway will begin with a negative status but will need to continue testing to remain compliant.
- Working towards negative: herds with one period of negative check testing, waiting for the results of the next one OR those herds using tag and test for calves but without 24 months of negative tests.
- Not negative: herds with a positive antibody test (further virus testing will be needed).
- Positive: any herd that has a virus positive result or contains a PI animal.

Moving a PI animal would allow the virus to infect a new batch of animals, so preventing this from happening forms a critical part of the eradication programme. Therefore, animals from herds that do not have negative status would need to be either tagged and tested at birth to determine if they are a PI or have a pre-movement test to confirm they are virus negative. The intention of the programme would be to eventually remove all PI animals from the national herd.

To protect the progress made by farmers and vets in eradicating BVD, we are also proposing a mandatory annual biosecurity assessment and plan. This would be developed in partnership with a vet and focus on protecting against the spread of disease. The assessment would include boundaries and contacts, trading and movements, cleansing and disinfecting and vaccinations. Guidance would be provided on inclusion of other topics relevant to a wider range of diseases, such as Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) and Blue Tongue,

as well as strengthening sector resilience against future disease challenges. The contents of the assessment and plan would not be required to be reported to Defra, only information as to whether it has been completed and the overall biosecurity assessment score. A template for the biosecurity assessment will be provided.

To minimise burden on keepers with smaller herds, we propose an adapted set of rules for farms with 10 or fewer cattle. Annual testing would not be required, but any animals born on the holding must be tagged and tested. If the animal is found to be a PI, a PI hunt must be carried out. Animals must be pre-movement tested, unless going direct to slaughter or via a slaughter market. These farms would be exempted from the annual biosecurity assessment requirement.

A partial exemption for non-approved or non-licenced finishing units, where 99% or more of the animals are not born on the farm. In Year 1, animals can leave the unit and go to a green livestock market without any additional testing. In Year 2, an annual check test would be required. If the check test is negative, animals can continue to leave the unit and go to a green livestock market without any additional testing. If the check test is positive, a full PI hunt is not required. Animals can still leave the unit and go to a green livestock market if they are individually tested and negative. Animals which are not tested can only go direct to slaughter, or via a red or slaughter market. From Year 3 onwards, only animals with individual negative status can go to green markets. Animals which are not tested can only go direct to slaughter, or via a red or slaughter market. From the start of the scheme, any animals born on the holding must be tagged and tested. If the animal is found to be a PI, its dam must be tested, alongside any animals that came from the same birth holding on the finishing unit. These farms would need to adhere to the annual biosecurity assessment requirement. Approved or licenced finishing units would need to follow the same rules as they do at present.

Guidance would be provided for farmers and vets, to support them in understanding the requirements of the programme.

Questions on the mandatory Bovine Viral Diarrhoea (BVD) eradication programme

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements

Question 20 a. A mandatory BVD eradication programme should be introduced for cattle in England.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 20 b. If you have answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, please explain why:

Free text

Question 21 a. To improve estimates of the prevalence of BVD in the English herd, all test results should be submitted to Defra by: (Please select all that apply)

- The vet
- The lab
- None of the above
- Other

Question 21 b. If you have answered “none of the above” or “other”, please explain why.

Free text

Question 22. The approach of identifying and removing persistently infected (PI) animals is the most appropriate approach to the eradication of BVD.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 23 a. The requirement to start a PI hunt within 30 days of a positive antibody test result is:

- Too long
- Just right
- Too short

Question 23 b. If you have selected too short OR too long, please select an appropriate timescale:

- Within 7 days
- Within 10 days
- Within 20 days
- Within 40 days
- Other

Question 23 c. If you have answered “other”, please explain why.

Free text

Question 24 a. The requirement to complete a PI hunt within a week once initiated is:

- Too long
- Just right
- Too short

Question 24 b. If you have selected too short OR too long, please select an appropriate timescale

- within 3 days
- within 5 days
- within 10 days
- within 14 days
- Other

Question 24 c. If you have answered “other”, please explain why.

Free text

Question 25. Movement restrictions should be placed on herds with animals that test positive for BVD virus until any PI animals are identified and removed.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 26. The farm of birth of a PI animal must conduct a PI hunt if they have not done so since the birth of the PI animal

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 27. The dam (mother) of a PI animal must be virus tested.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 28 At the point of sale, BVD status should be available at: (Please select all that apply)

- Herd level
- Individual level
- None of the above

Question 29. BVD status should be available to those with access to the secure movements database.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 30 a. Vaccination data for individual cattle should be (Please select all that apply)

- Recorded on the secure movements database

- Visible to registered users
- None of the above
- Other

Question 30 b. If you have answered “none of the above” or “other”, please explain why.

Free text

Question 31. There should be a requirement for a mandatory annual biosecurity assessment and plan.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 32 a. An adapted set of rules should be followed by

(Please select all that apply)

1. Herds of 10 or fewer cattle
2. Finishing units where 99% or more of the animals are not born on the farm
3. None of the above
4. Other

Question 32 b. If you have answered “none of the above” or “other”, please explain why

Free text

Question 33 a. Non-approved or non-licenced finishing units should retain access to green livestock markets in year 1 with no additional testing, and in year 2 provided they have a negative annual check test or are sending animals which are individually tested and negative. From year 3 onwards, only animals with individual negative status should go to green markets.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 33 b. If you have answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, please explain why

Free text

The introduction of a mandatory Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) control and eradication programme

The proposed PRRS control and eradication programme would introduce legislation requiring pig herds to test and declare their status. The measures would be brought in over several phases, with the requirements changing in each phase. The phases have been designed to deliver measurable progress in PRRS control, with the aim of reaching eradication in the long term. Towards the end of phase 5, we will review the progress of the programme and publish a second consultation. This consultation will set out the additional measures that will be needed to eradicate the disease in further phases. By the end of phase 5, which will be 12 years into the programme, we hope that PRRS is being successfully controlled.

The PRRS control and eradication programme is substantially different to the BVD programme, largely due to the makeup of the sector, with most pigs owned by a handful of large companies, and how the virus spreads; not just through bodily fluids but also up to 3km through the air in the right weather conditions. Subsequently, the PRRS programme is more complex in its design and based on the risks associated with holding sizes, or certain activities, such as using gatherings.

Phase 1 of the PRRS scheme is designed to establish a baseline antibody status in sows for England. This will enable the units who have sows to know whether they have the virus and start to act on veterinary advice about how to control it. In Phase 2, we move onto virus testing and sequencing piglets and weaners for the majority of pig farms or units. The aim is to have piglets that are negative at birth, which are also negative at weaning. In Phase 3, holdings who are testing positive for virus, would need to start implementing additional measures to control the virus, with some restrictions on movements coming into effect.

In Phase 4 we are proposing to tighten some of these controls, alongside bringing in some additional measures to stop large pig farms setting up new units, or moving existing units, within close proximity to established units. In this phase we also start to involve the wider sector, such as hauliers and drivers dropping off feed and supplies to farms and units. In Phase 5, some of these measures tighten further, including requiring units to have sows and boars testing negative ahead of breeding.

To enable Defra to have a full picture of the virus and the links to the AHWR, information collected as part of the PRRS programme would be stored alongside the information from the AHWR.

We have divided the programme into three sizes of farm, those with fewer than 51 pigs, those with fewer than 51 sows and those with 51 or more sows, or 601 or more growing

pigs (if breeding sows not present), with proportionate measures for each. There is an extra requirement for anyone who wants to send their animals to an agricultural show.

Guidance would be provided for both farmers and vets for the programme, including templates for biosecurity assessments and the PRRS control plan.

The phases of the programme are summarised in the table below and set out in full beneath the table. Annex A provides the same information in graphic form.

Size of premises	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5
Fewer than 51 pigs and only want to send them to slaughter	No actions	No actions	No actions	No actions	No actions
Fewer than 51 pigs who want to send animals to farms and markets, more than 51 pigs in total but fewer than 51 sows, or fewer than 601 growing pigs (if breeding sows not present)	<p>All holdings currently vaccinating should continue vaccinating. Vaccine information shared with Defra.</p> <p>Pigs vaccinated with different modified live PRRSv strains should not mix, unless it is more than 2 months since vaccination.</p> <p>Holdings with breeding sows that do not vaccinate, should antibody test a percentage of sows and replacements with a UKAS accredited test.</p> <p>Testing frequency should be agreed with vet according to published</p>	<p>Measures from Phase 1 still apply.</p> <p>Herds showing clinical signs classically associated with PRRS should carry out testing, according to guidance, outside of normal testing cycles.</p> <p>Antibody or virus status declared at point of sale.</p> <p>Antibody or virus status available to registered users of the secure movements database.</p>	<p>Measures from Phases 1 and 2 still apply.</p> <p>Only animals from herds that are antibody negative or non-vaccine like negative are allowed to move to other farms and markets.</p> <p>All holdings to produce a PRRS control plan with their vet.</p> <p>Herds which are antibody or virus positive, or showing clinical signs of PRRS, need to implement their PRRS control plan, which should include virus testing.</p>	Measures from Phases 1, 2 and 3 still apply.	Measures from Phases 1, 2 and 3 still apply.

	<p>guidance and antibody status should be declared. Testing at least annually, and ahead of farrowing.</p> <p>Herd antibody status, as defined in the guidance, allocated by the vet, shared with Defra and available to all who have log in for the secure movements database.</p> <p>All holdings should do an annual biosecurity assessment with their vet.</p> <p>All PRRS test results must be reported to Defra, according to guidance.</p> <p>All AI material must be virus negative for PRRS.</p> <p>All testing must be UKAS accredited.</p>				
51 or more sows, or 601 or more growing pigs	<p>All holdings currently vaccinating should continue vaccinating. Vaccine information shared with Defra.</p> <p>Pigs vaccinated with different modified live PRRSv strains should not</p>	<p>Measures from Phase 1 still apply.</p> <p>Quarterly testing of a percentage of piglets/weaners for PRRSv using a UKAS accredited PCR method including sequencing.</p>	<p>Measures from Phases 1 and 2 still apply.</p> <p>Gilts, sows and boars must be wild type virus negative to move onto a holding where there are births (a percentage tested).</p>	<p>Measures from Phases 1, 2 and 3 still apply.</p> <p>Not allowed to establish a new pig unit or move a pig unit within 0.5km of the boundary of an existing unit of 51 or more sows.</p>	<p>Measures from Phases 1, 2, 3 and 4 still apply.</p> <p>Only herds where sows and boars test virus negative allowed to breed.</p> <p>Not allowed to establish a new pig unit or move</p>

	<p>mix, unless it is more than 2 months since vaccination.</p> <p>Holdings with breeding sows that do not vaccinate, should antibody test a percentage of sows and replacements with a UKAS accredited test.</p> <p>Testing frequency should be agreed with vet according to published guidance and antibody status should be declared. Testing at least annually, and ahead of farrowing.</p> <p>Herd antibody status, as defined in the guidance, allocated by the vet, shared with Defra and available to all who have log in for the secure movements database.</p> <p>All holdings should do an annual biosecurity assessment with their vet.</p> <p>All PRRS test results must be reported to Defra, according to guidance.</p>	<p>Test results should be declared for each batch of testing, with herd status altered accordingly by the vet.</p> <p>Virus status of herds assigned as per guidance, available to all who have a log in for the secure movements database.</p> <p>Virus status declared at point of sale.</p> <p>Herds showing clinical signs classically associated with PRRS should carry out testing, according to guidance, outside of normal testing cycles.</p>	<p>PRRSv positive pigs (wild and undefined type) should not be moved onto a holding with other pigs.</p> <p>PRRSv positive pigs (vaccine like) should not be moved onto a holding with vaccinated pigs, unless they are using the same vaccine.</p> <p>Herds that are virus negative or vaccinating and stable only need to virus test and sequence quarterly.</p> <p>All holdings to produce a PRRS control plan with their vet.</p> <p>Herds which are antibody or virus positive, or showing clinical signs of PRRS, need to implement their PRRS control plan, which should include virus testing.</p> <p>Those dropping pigs off at pig units to drop off at PRRS negative</p>	<p>Not allowed to establish a new pig unit or move a pig unit of virus positive pigs within 1km of the boundary of where pigs are kept on any unit producing piglets.</p> <p>Not allowed to establish a new pig unit or move a pig unit within 3km of the boundary of where pigs are kept on a GMU or GDU.</p> <p>Six months' notice to be provided of all new pig units or moving of existing units.</p> <p>All pig units to submit their biosecurity status to Defra, with results available to all who have log in for the secure movements database.</p> <p>All pig units which have not previously tested virus tested for PRRSv need to start testing and</p>	<p>a pig unit of virus positive pigs within 3km of the boundary of where pigs are kept on any unit producing piglets.</p>
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	<p>All AI material must be virus negative for PRRS.</p> <p>All testing must be UKAS accredited.</p>		<p>holdings first, and then at PRRS positive holdings.</p>	<p>sequencing on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>Units who are repeatedly positive for non-vaccine like virus in quarterly testing must put in additional vet intervention.</p> <p>All holdings which are not virus negative and where there are births must virus test each batch of piglets. This supersedes the requirement to virus test and sequence quarterly from Phase 2.</p> <p>Haulage drivers to avoid taking rest breaks near pig units wherever possible.</p> <p>Multi-pickups and multi-drop offs from PRRSv positive farms not permitted.</p> <p>Those dropping off feed or equipment at pig units to drop off at PRRS negative holdings first.</p>	
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<p>Additional measures if want to show pigs</p>	<p>No additional measures in year 1.</p> <p>From year 2 onwards:</p> <p>Pigs going to shows must test virus negative at the beginning of the show season and use an APHA approved isolation facility. No further testing required. Or test virus negative ahead of each show.</p> <p>Anyone who vaccinates needs to do so at least 3 months in advance of the show.</p>	<p>Measures from Phase 1 still in place.</p>			
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Holdings with fewer than 51 pigs (inclusive of sows, boars and piglets) across any 12-month period who only send animals direct to slaughter would be exempt from all measures throughout all phases of the programme. This is because they only pose a small risk of spreading PRRS due to the number of pigs present on the holding, and because animals are only moving off to slaughter.

Holdings with fewer than 51 sows and holdings with fewer than 51 pigs who want to send animals to other farms and livestock markets would need to follow measures introduced across three phases, each lasting for two years. These rules would also apply to those who have fewer than 601 growing pigs (if breeding sows not present).

The following measures would be brought in for Phase 1 and apply for the whole of the programme. These measures would apply to all pig farms which did not meet the exemption:

- All holdings currently vaccinating for PRRS virus when the mandatory programme launches would continue vaccinating. Vaccination information would be shared with Defra.
- Pigs vaccinated with different modified live PRRSv strains should not mix, unless it is more than 2 months since vaccination.
- Holdings with breeding sows not vaccinating, would need to antibody test a percentage of their sows and replacements with a UKAS accredited test.
- Testing frequency would be agreed with the vet but would need to take place at least annually. Those who farrow multiple times a year would need to test the sows ahead of each farrowing, up to a maximum of every 6 weeks.
- Testing must be representative of the pigs on the farm and include animals in each management group.
- Herd antibody status would be made available to registered users of the secure movements database.
- All holdings must complete an annual biosecurity assessment.
- All PRRS test results must be reported to Defra.
- Herd status would be allocated by the vet and reported to Defra as one of the following:
 - Antibody negative
 - Antibody positive
 - Unknown
- All artificial insemination (AI) material must be virus tested for PRRS and must be negative.
- All testing must be done by a laboratory that is UKAS accredited to ISO/IEC 17025 standards for the type of testing being done
- Laboratories must test samples received within 5 working days.

- Test results and changes of status must be declared within 7 working days of receiving the results.

The following additional measures would be brought in for phase 2 and continue to apply for the rest of the programme:

- Herds showing signs classically associated with PRRS would need to carry out testing, outside of their usual testing cycle. This may include PRRS virus testing and sequencing, the nature of the testing should be decided in consultation with the vet.
- Antibody or virus status would be declared at point of sale. Whether this status is antibody or virus will depend on whether the holding is carrying out annual antibody testing or has moved onto virus testing, such as if they have detected clinical signs of PRRS or were voluntarily sequencing alongside vaccination. Status is likely to be at a herd level, unless individual testing has been carried out.
- Herd antibody or virus status (depending on testing regime) would be available to registered users of the secure movements database.
- Test results must be declared to Defra for each batch of testing, with herd status altered accordingly by the vet.
- Herds that are vaccinating should continue to declare their vaccine information.

The following additional measures would be brought in for Phase 3:

- Only animals from herds that are antibody negative or wild type virus negative (allowed to be vaccine virus positive) would be allowed to move to other farms and to livestock markets.
- Holdings would be required to produce a PRRS control plan, which would set out the steps required to remove PRRS from the herd, and may include additional testing, biosecurity measures or vaccinations. The control plan would need to be developed with a vet on an annual basis.
- Herds which test and find they are antibody or virus positive or are showing clinical signs of PRRS would need to implement their PRRS control plan, including virus testing.

There will not be additional measures added in Phase 4 or Phase 5.

Holdings with 51 or more sows at any point in the year would need to follow measures introduced across five phases. These rules would also apply to anyone who has 601 or more growing pigs (if breeding sows not present).

The following measures would be brought in for Phase 1 (lasting two years in length) and only apply during this phase. These measures apply to all pig farms which do not meet the exemption:

- All holdings currently vaccinating for PRRS virus would continue vaccinating. Vaccination information would be shared with Defra.
- Pigs vaccinated with different modified live PRRSv strains should not mix, unless it is more than 2 months since vaccination.
- Holdings with breeding sows that do not vaccinate would need to antibody test a percentage of their sows and replacements with a UKAS accredited test.
- Testing frequency would be agreed with the vet, but testing should take place at least annually. Those who farrow multiple times a year should test a percentage of sows ahead of each farrowing up to a maximum of every 6 weeks.
- Testing must be representative of the pigs on the farm and should include animals in each management group.
- Herd status would be allocated as one of the following:
 - Antibody negative
 - Antibody positive
 - Unknown
- Herd antibody status would be available to registered users of the secure movements database.
- All holdings must complete an annual biosecurity assessment with their vet, which includes assigning a biosecurity status to the unit.
- All PRRS test results must be reported to Defra.
- All artificial insemination (AI) material must be virus tested for PRRS and must be negative.
- All testing must be done by a laboratory that is UKAS accredited to ISO/IEC 17025 standards for the type of testing being done.
- Laboratories must test samples received within 5 working days.
- Test results, and changes of status, must be declared within 7 working days of receiving the results.

The following additional measures would be brought in for Phase 2 (lasting two years in length) and continue to apply for the rest of the programme:

- Quarterly testing of piglets and weaners for PRRS virus must be carried out, using a laboratory that is UKAS accredited to perform ISO/IEC 17025 standard PCR method, including sequencing. Testing should be done on a percentage of piglets and weaners.
- Test results should be declared to Defra for each batch of testing, with herd status altered accordingly.
- Herd status would be allocated as one of the following:
 - Virus negative - no strains of PRRS virus are detected in the herd
 - Wild type virus positive - virus which did not originate from a vaccination and has entered the herd from an unknown external source is detected in the herd
 - Vaccine type virus positive - virus which originated from the modified live virus used in a vaccine is detected in the herd

- Undetermined type virus positive - virus is detected in the herd, but it is not known whether this is wild type or vaccine type
- Unknown (until tested)
- Herds that are vaccinating should continue to declare their vaccine information.
- Herds showing clinical signs of PRRS would need to carry out testing, outside of their usual testing cycle. This may include PRRS virus testing and sequencing, the nature of the testing should be decided in consultation with the vet.
- Virus status would be required to be declared at point of sale.
- Herd virus status would be made available to registered users of the secure movements database.

The following additional measures would be brought in for Phase 3 (lasting two years in length) and continue to apply for the rest of the programme:

- A percentage of each batch of gilts and sows would need to be virus tested and test negative for wild type virus to move onto a holding where there are births.
- A percentage of each batch of boars would need to be virus tested and test negative for wild type virus to move onto a holding where there are births.
- Pigs from PRRS virus positive herds (wild and undefined type) must not be moved onto a holding with other pigs.
- PRRS vaccine like virus positive pigs not to be moved onto a holding with vaccinated pigs, unless they are using the same vaccine.
- Herds that are virus negative or vaccinating and stable (herds that are vaccinating and are not showing clinical signs of disease) would only be required to virus test and sequence quarterly, unless animals are showing clinical signs of disease.
- Holdings would be required to produce a PRRS control plan which would set out the steps required to remove PRRS from the herd, and may include additional testing, biosecurity measures or vaccinations. The control plan would need to be developed with a vet on an annual basis.
- Herds which test and find they are antibody or virus positive or herds that are showing clinical signs classically associated with PRRS would need to implement their PRRS control plan, including virus testing.
- Those dropping off pigs at pig units should drop off at PRRS negative holdings first, before moving onto PRRS positive holdings. Vehicles should be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected once animals are unloaded.

The following additional measures would be brought in for Phase 4 (lasting three years in length) and continue to apply for the rest of the programme:

- It would not be permitted to establish a new pig unit or move a pig unit within 0.5km of the boundary of an existing pig unit of 51 or more sows. It will be permitted to move pigs onto an existing pig unit.
- It would not be permitted to establish a new pig unit or move a pig unit with pigs from a virus positive herd within 1km of the boundary of any pig unit producing

piglets and with 51 or more sows. This will increase to 3km in phase 5 as in the right conditions, PRRS virus can spread up to 3km. It will be permitted to move pigs onto an existing pig unit.

- It would not be permitted to establish a new pig unit or move a pig unit within 3km of the boundary of a gilt maiden unit (GMU), producing gilts for breeding, or gilt development unit (GDU), growing gilts for breeding. It will be permitted to move pigs onto an existing pig unit.
- All new pig units or those moving a pig unit would need to provide 6 months' notice of the move and demonstrate that they are meeting all the requirements. If establishing a new unit, the unit which currently houses the pigs would need to be virus negative.
- All pig units would need to submit their biosecurity status, as determined through their biosecurity assessment, to Defra via their vet, with results accessible to registered users of the secure movements database.
- All pig units which have not previously virus tested for PRRS, need to start testing and sequencing on a quarterly basis.
- Units that are repeatedly infected with PRRS in quarterly testing would need to put in place additional testing and review their biosecurity with their vet, as per their PRRS control plan.
- All holdings which are not virus negative and where there are births, would need to virus test each batch of piglets (maximum testing of every 6 weeks). This would supersede the requirement to test and sequence quarterly from phase 2.
- Haulage drivers carrying pigs should avoid taking rest breaks near pig units, wherever possible.
- Multi-pickups and drop-offs from virus and antibody positive farms would not be permitted.
- Those dropping feed or equipment off at pig units should drop off at PRRS negative holdings first.

The following additional measures would be brought in for Phase 5 (lasting three years in length):

- Only herds where sows and boars test virus negative would be allowed to breed.
- It would not be permitted to establish a new pig unit or move a pig unit with pigs from a virus positive herd within 3km of the boundary of any pig unit producing piglets with 51 or more sows.

Additional measures if holdings wish to send animals to an agricultural show or a show and sale throughout the year. These apply to holdings of any size. If the holding has fewer than 51 pigs and only sends animals direct to slaughter and to a show, only the show testing requirements would apply. These measures would not apply for year 1 of the programme, but would be brought in from year 2 onwards.

- All pigs would need to test individually wild type virus negative at the beginning of the show season and use an APHA approved isolation facility for the remainder of

the season. If this is done, no further testing would need to be carried out, unless the animals are showing clinical signs of disease.

- Alternatively, pigs would need to be individually virus tested ahead of each show.
- Anyone vaccinating pigs would need to do so at least 3 months in advance of the show.

Testing percentages for herds

We are proposing that a representative percentage of the herd on each pig unit or farm is tested for PRRS. The purpose of this is to detect a 5% prevalence with 95% confidence. The testing percentage will be set out in guidance, not in legislation. The table below sets out the number of animals that should be tested, relative to the size of the farm.

Size of premises	Type of pigs	Population size	Number of pigs to test if virus testing using bloods	Number of pigs to test if antibody testing using bloods	Number of pigs to test if antibody testing using oral fluids
Fewer than 51 pigs	Not applicable	50	36	15	16
Fewer than 51 sows	Breeding sows	Up to 50	36	15	16
	Weaners	Up to 500	63	17	19
	Finishers	Up to 1000	65	17	19
51 or more sows, or 601 or more growing pigs	Not applicable	Infinite	66	17	19

Questions on the mandatory Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS) eradication programme

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

Question 34 a. A mandatory PRRS control and eradication programme should be introduced for pigs in England.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 34 b. If you have answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, please explain why.

Free text

Question 35. There should be some mapping available to show the PRRS status of farms to inform movement choices.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 36 a. The timescales for the phases of the scheme are appropriate.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 36 b. If you answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, please specify an appropriate timescale with supporting evidence

Free text

Question 37. There should be a requirement for a mandatory annual biosecurity assessment and plan.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 38 a. All test results must be submitted to Defra to improve estimates of PRRS in the English herd.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 38 b. If you have answered “disagree” or “strongly disagree”, please explain why

Free text

Question 39 a. Vaccination data for piglets and sows should be (Please select all that apply)

- Recorded on the secure movements database
- Visible to registered users
- None of the above
- Other

Question 39 b. If you have answered “none of the above” or “other”, please explain why

Free text

Question 40. The supervising vet should allocate or update a herd antibody or virus status, based on all testing.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 41. Herd level PRRS status should be available to registered users of the secure online movements database.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 42. From Phase 3 onwards, all farms with more than 51 pigs, or those who want to send pigs to other farms and markets should produce a PRRS control plan with their vet.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 43. From Phase 3 onwards, PRRS virus positive farms and unstable farms should have to implement their PRRS control plan.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 44. In Phase 4, pig units with 51 or more sows, or 601 or more growing pigs, should not be permitted to move within 0.5km of a boundary of another pig unit of 51 or more sows.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 45. In Phase 4, PRRS virus positive pigs should not be permitted to move within 1km of a boundary of a unit producing piglets.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 46. In Phase 4, PRRS virus positive pigs should not be permitted to move within (Please select all that apply)

- 3km of a boundary of gilt maiden (GMU).
- 3 km of a gilt development unit (GDU).
- None of the above

Question 47. In Phase 4, Herds with recurrent PRRS reinfections in quarterly tests should receive enhanced veterinary oversight including additional testing and review of their biosecurity.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 48. To minimise the risk of spreading the virus, hauliers and other farm visitors, such as delivery drivers, should move from negative to positive farms on their routes.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Question 49. In Phase 5, PRRS virus positive pigs should not be permitted to move with 3km of a boundary of a unit producing piglets.

Strongly agree – Agree – Neither agree nor disagree – Disagree – Strongly disagree – Don't know

Compliance and enforcement

Many farmers will already be aware of the importance and value of having regular veterinary advice, and of tackling BVD and PRRS. Many will be doing so already in order to export to the EU or as part of the Animal Health and Welfare Pathway. Ensuring all relevant parties are informed of and understand their responsibilities through plentiful advice and guidance is critical to achieving a high degree of compliance. In repeat or serious cases of non-compliance, actions such as imposition of movement restrictions, issuing of penalty notices and prosecution may be considered.

Question 50 a. In cases of non-compliance which of the following actions might be appropriate (Please select all that apply).

- Movement restrictions
- Issuing of penalty notices
- Other
- No action should be implemented

Question 50 b. If you have selected “No action should be implemented” OR “other” please explain your answer

Free text

Estimated impact of proposals

Cost-and-benefit analysis has been carried out to estimate the impacts of these proposals, which are designed where possible to align with existing requirements and minimise additional burden on farmers. Given the economic considerations around small businesses, exemptions have been built into the policy design to minimise impacts on the smallest herds and flocks.

Mandatory AHWR and flock health plan

The introduction of the mandatory AHWR and flock health plan would result in a financial cost to farmers for veterinary time spent carrying out the visit and providing written recommendations, an estimated annual cost of £375 (based on an hourly rate of £125 for three hours). This estimated cost applies to cattle, sheep and pigs, and is independent of flock or herd size. Those farms already required to have regular vet visits as part of assurance scheme membership, could minimise any additional financial burden through using the AHWR or other mandatory visits under the Animal Health Law as one of these qualifying visits. The estimated financial benefits to farmers through increased productivity because of the AHWR outweighs these costs. Productivity gains, such as reduced disease prevalence, increased production efficiency and a reduction in culling would be delivered through improved disease management and adoption of enhanced management practices. The return would differ across farms, dependent on factors such as farm size and production system, but it is conservatively estimated that for every £1 spent on veterinary time there would be a return of £5 in farm profits, although this is not a causal estimate. Further adjustments are then made in arriving at the final benefits-cost-ratio for the AHWR, to avoid overstating the scale of potential benefits.

In addition, there are several non-monetised benefits which have been identified as resulting from the mandatory AHWR and flock health plan:

1. Carbon emission savings from lower levels of culling and reduction of premature deaths of livestock.
2. Improving antimicrobial and anthelmintic stewardship to protect these valuable treatments in the future.
3. Higher productivity and lower greenhouse gas emissions on sheep farms from reduced wormer resistance because of the mandatory parasite control plan.
4. Better understanding of livestock health and welfare in relative and absolute senses by Defra and farmers through the collection and limited sharing of health and welfare data for pigs, sheep and cattle.
5. Possible increase in export markets from being able to demonstrate lower levels of disease.

BVD eradication programme

The proposed BVD eradication programme would result in costs to farmers through additional testing for BVD, imposition of movement restrictions on farms that are BVD positive and culling of PI animals to remove them from the herd. The programme has been designed to impose reduced additional financial impact on those farms already taking positive steps to eradicate BVD, including those already receiving funding as part of the [‘get funding to improve animal health and welfare’](#) service. This is because farms who already have negative status would continue with annual check testing (or tag and testing if preferred) and be able to move stock freely, with no further pre-movement testing required. Farms that have already taken steps to achieve a negative herd status are less likely to discover PI animals on their farm and incur the additional costs of a mandatory PI hunt.

Benefits to farmers would be delivered through enhanced productivity because of lower levels of infection and a reduction in the current costs farmers bear for monitoring the disease, since the programme is designed to eradicate it. Benefits to the wider public would be delivered through greenhouse gas savings because of biosecurity improvements and culling of PI animals. Over the seven-year period which has been appraised, the estimated costs to the sector are £55.8m whilst the estimated benefits delivered are £183.6m.

In addition to this, there are several non-monetised benefits which have been identified. BVD weakens the immune system of cattle and increases the likelihood of them contracting other diseases, so eradicating BVD from the herd has an expected value higher than loss of productivity from BVD alone. Alongside this, the requirement for an annual biosecurity plan would be expected to reduce the likelihood of many other diseases impacting holdings. Taken together, this overall reduction in infections should decrease the risk and spread of antimicrobial resistance, through reducing the number of animals requiring treatment with antimicrobials. Finally, as BVD is an OIE-listed disease of international concern to trade, its eradication should result in benefit to the marketing of English beef and dairy.

PRRS eradication programme

The proposed PRRS eradication programme would result in costs to farmers for actions taken to control PRRS and eradicate it from units, including mandatory testing requirements and movement restrictions, which would differ under each phase of the programme. These costs have been estimated over a ten-year period to amount to £78.7m across the sector. Benefits would be achieved through increased productivity of slaughter pigs and improved fertility of sows, providing an overall increased efficiency of production estimated to total £122m. Research into the estimated greenhouse gas impact of PRRS in England is ongoing, but initial Defra analysis suggests that this programme could deliver £20m-£40m in greenhouse gas savings from non-infected compared to PRRS-infected growing pigs.

Question 51. Please provide any comments or evidence you feel should be considered concerning the socio-economic impact the proposed policy may have on both producers and consumers.

Free text

General comments

Question 52. Please share any other comments you would like to make on any of the proposals detailed in this consultation.

Free text