



Veterinary  
Medicines  
Directorate



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

# Consultation on revised charges for the National Residues Control Programme

November 2025



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Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to [residues@vmd.gov.uk](mailto:residues@vmd.gov.uk).

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## Overview

The National Residues Control Programme (NRCP) is a statutory annual surveillance programme in England, Scotland, and Wales to sample and test food animal products, for residues of veterinary medicines and prohibited substances before they enter the food chain. This helps to protect human health and provides assurances about food safety and standards. The programme is a component of the United Kingdom [Multi-Annual National Control Plan \(UK MANCP\)](#) which is the framework of official control systems in place for feed and food law and animal health (including aquatic animals and bee health) and animal welfare rules. The programme currently covers the following:

1. red meat
2. poultry meat
3. farmed fish
4. eggs
5. wild and farmed game
6. honey
7. milk
8. sausage casings

## Purpose

This consultation is about proposed revisions to the charges for delivering the NRCP. The proposed new charges are needed to achieve full cost recovery, and to ensure that the NRCP remains effective and viable.

## Geographic scope of this consultation

This consultation covers England, Scotland and Wales and is being undertaken by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) in partnership with the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government.

## Audience

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

Food business operators in England, Scotland, and Wales.

## How to respond

Our preferred way of receiving responses is through the Citizen Space platform.

If you are unable to use Citizen Space, you can download the consultation documents and return your response via email to [residues@vmd.gov.uk](mailto:residues@vmd.gov.uk).

This consultation is also available in Welsh in line with Welsh Language Standards.

The consultation will run for 8 weeks. The consultation opens on 24/11/2025 and closes at 23:59 on 19/01/2026. Any responses received after this date will not be analysed.

## Confidentiality and data protection

A summary of responses to this consultation will be published on the Government website at: [www.gov.uk/defra](http://www.gov.uk/defra). An annex to the consultation summary will list all organisations that responded but will not include personal names, addresses or other contact details.

Defra, the Scottish Government, and the Welsh Government may publish the content of your response to this consultation to make it available to the public without your personal name and private contact details (for example home address, email address).

If you click on 'Yes' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, you are asked to state clearly what information you would like to be kept confidential and explain your reasons for confidentiality. The reason for this is that information in responses to this consultation may be subject to release to the public or other parties in accordance with the access to information law (these are primarily the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs), the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)). We have obligations, mainly under the EIRs, FOIA and DPA, to disclose information to particular recipients or to the public in certain circumstances. In view of this, your explanation of your reasons for requesting confidentiality for all or part of your response would help us balance these obligations for disclosure against any obligation of confidentiality. If we receive a request for the information that you have provided in your response to this consultation, we will take full account of your reasons for requesting confidentiality of your response, but we cannot guarantee that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances.

If you click on 'No' in response to the question asking if you would like anything in your response to be kept confidential, we will be able to release the content of your response to the public, but we won't make your personal name and private contact details publicly available.

There may be occasions when Defra will share the information you provide in response to the consultation, including any personal data, with external analysts. This is for the purposes of consultation response analysis and provision of a report of the summary of responses only.

Please find our latest privacy notice uploaded as a related document alongside our consultation documents.

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to: [consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.coordinator@defra.gov.uk)

## Using and sharing your information

How we use your personal data is set out in the consultation and call for evidence exercise privacy notice which can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defras-consultations-and-call-for-evidence-exercises-privacy-notice>

### Other Information

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Cabinet Office “Consultation Principles” and be found at: [Microsoft Word - Consultation Principles \(1\).docx \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

# Introduction

The Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) is an Executive Agency of the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra). The VMD manages the [National Residues Control Programme](#) (NRCP), which is a statutory programme that is designed to help identify residues of banned substances, veterinary medicines, and contaminants in products of animal origin which are destined for the food chain. The NRCP helps to protect human health and provides assurances to the UK's trading partners about the quality and safety of exported products of animal origin. The programme helps to support international trade worth approximately £12 billion per annum to the UK economy.

Residues policy and surveillance is a devolved matter, so the VMD works in close partnership with the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government to deliver the NRCP in Great Britain.

The programme operates on a full cost recovery basis, so each of the livestock sectors that take part are invoiced each year. The programme currently costs approximately £6.6 million per annum, with a forecast to reach approximately £7m per annum by 2028. This is due to a rise in the costs of procured services which are necessary to deliver the programme such as sampling, testing, and consumables. Without the proposed revisions to the current charges that industry pays, it is forecast that there will be an under recovery of the costs of the programme by £1,000,000 in the 2026/27 financial year.

The aim of this joint public consultation exercise by the VMD, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government is to explain and seek views on the impact of our proposals to increase the charges that industry participants in the NRCP will pay during the 2026 and 2027 financial years. The proposed changes are set out in Table 2 (On page 14, and available in the separate annex document). As this is a statutory programme, to implement these revisions would require an update to Schedule 1 of the [Charges for Residues Surveillance \(Amendment\) Regulations](#) 2024 (Schedule 1). As this is a devolved matter, the UK Government, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government would lay separate Statutory Instruments to cover food business operators in England, Scotland and Wales respectively.

The VMD works in partnership with commercial experts and our delivery partners to ensure value for money of the NRCP and a summary of this activity is described in the background section of the separate annex document. We have also provided additional background information about the costs of the NRCP in the annex.

A full regulatory impact assessment has not been published alongside this consultation, because the sum of the proposals falls below £10 million. Through this public consultation exercise, the VMD, Scottish Government and the Welsh Government are seeking stakeholder's views on the potential financial and other impacts of these proposals.

This public consultation is strictly about proposals to change the statutory charges for the NRCP during the 2026 and 2027 financial years. Broader suggestions to amend the core

functions of the NRCP such as the scientific methods, the veterinary substances we test for, or the frequency of sampling and testing is out of scope of this consultation. This is because those aspects have a separate statutory basis.

## Glossary

A glossary of relevant terms and definitions is included for reference and should be read alongside this document.

NRCP	<a href="#">The National Residue Control Programme</a> is a statutory programme to collect samples of products of animal origin destined for human consumption. These samples are tested to check for residues of various prohibited substances.
<a href="#">Charges for Residues Surveillance Regulations</a>	The Charges for Residues Surveillance Regulations 2006 sets out the rates to be paid by the sectors that are covered by the surveillance programme.
POAO	Product of animal origin destined for human consumption. Examples include egg, poultry meat, sausages, and fish.
Cross subsidy	Cross subsidisation is the practice of charging higher prices to one type of consumers to artificially lower prices for another group.
Managing Public Money	This document is produced by HM Treasury and sets out the main principles for dealing with resources in public sector organisations in the UK.
Throughput	In this context this refers to the number of animals that are processed at an abattoir.
AFBI	Agri Food and Biosciences Institute.



# About you

1. Would you like your response to be confidential? (Select one option only)

- Yes
- No
- If you answered yes, please give your reason:

2. Who are you responding as? (Select one option only)

- Individual – You are responding with your personal views, rather than as an official representative of a business / business association / other
- Organisation - You are responding in an official capacity as a representative of a business, business association or other organisation
- Public sector body – In an official capacity as a representative of a local government organisation / public service provider / other public sector body in the UK or elsewhere
- Industry – In an official capacity representing the views of a business
- Campaign group/NGO – In an official capacity as the representative of a non-governmental organisation / trade union / other organisation
- Academia – In an official capacity as a representative of an academic institution
- Other (please specify):

3. Which of the following best describes the role or field you belong to? (If you have multiple roles, please select the one which best represents your interests in this consultation response) (select one option only)

- Food Processor
- Feed Business Operator
- Retailer of veterinary medicines
- Veterinary surgeon
- Suitably qualified person (SQP)
- Academic
- Consumer
- Professional keeper of animals
- Other, please state:

4. What is the name of your organisation?

5. Please select where you/your organisation is based (select all that apply):

- England
- Northern Ireland
- Scotland
- Wales
- Other

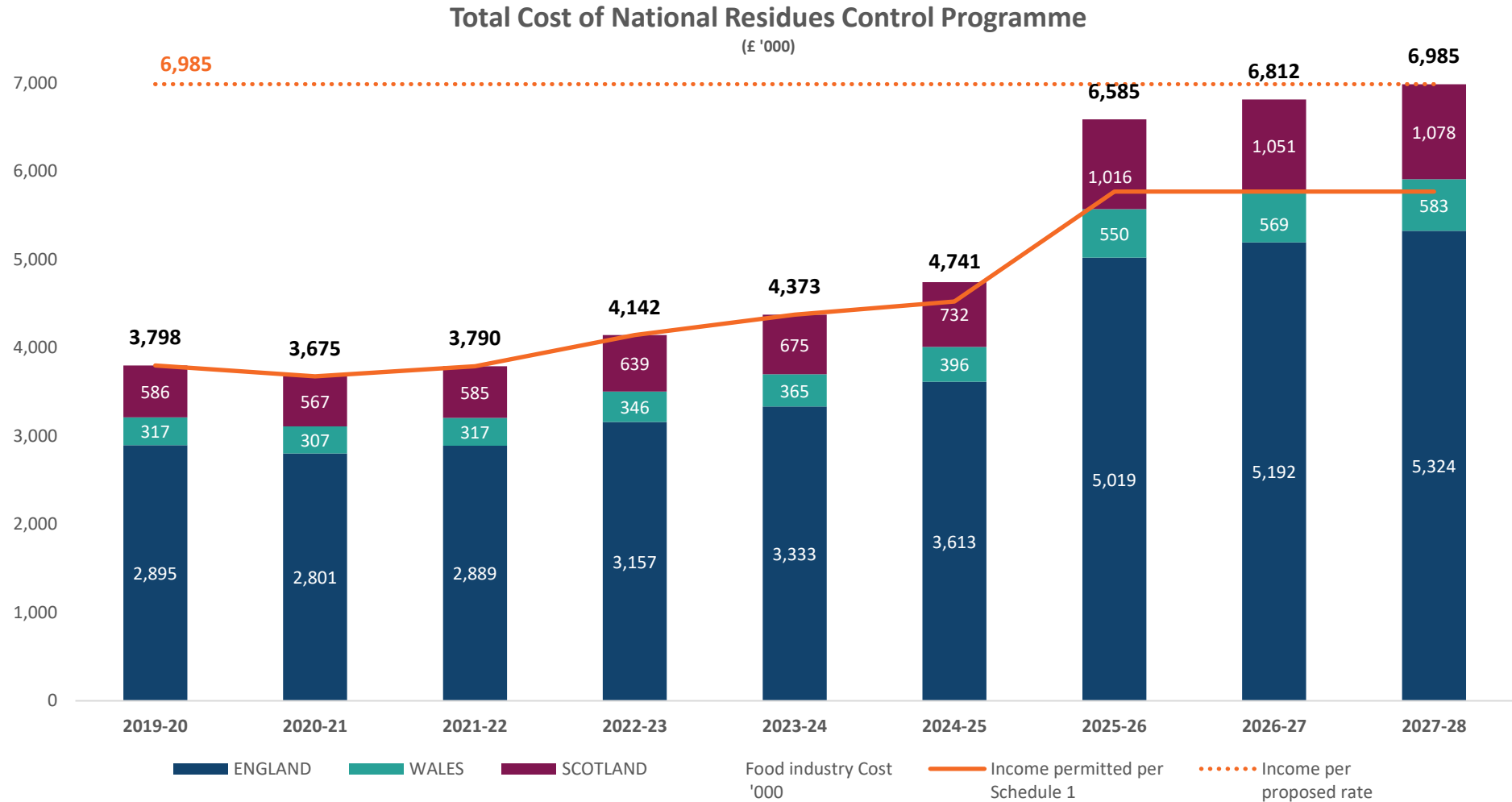
## Rationale

1. The VMD is proposing to make changes to Schedule 1 of the Charges for Residues Surveillance Regulations to recover costs for providing the NRCP until the financial year ending March 2028. The VMD, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government will continue to monitor the delivery of the programme and will publicly consult if further revisions to charges are required in future years.
2. Table 1 shows the historic and forecast costs of the NRCP up to the financial year ending March 2028. During the 2024 to 2025 financial year there was a 4% increase in costs compared to previous years, and we forecast that in the 2025 to 2026 financial year there will be a 35% increase in costs. We anticipate that costs will continue to increase by an average of 5% per annum over the next five years. This is due to unavoidable rises in overheads and other costs such as sampling, processing, and testing.
3. Table 1 also shows that, based on the current Schedule 1 rates, there will be an under-recovery of costs leading to a deficit of £0.8 million by 2025 to 2026. However, the deficit would fall to zero by 2026 if Schedule1 rates were updated as proposed in this consultation. This information is also demonstrated by the solid and dashed lines on Graph 1.

## Table 1: costs of the NRCP

Financial year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
<b>Total cost of NRCP - England</b>	2.9	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.6	5.0	5.2	5.3
<b>Total cost of NRCP - Wales</b>	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.6
<b>Total cost of NRCP - Scotland</b>	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	1.0	1.1	1.1
<b>Total cost of NRCP</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>7.0</b>
<b>Income permitted by Schedule 1</b>	3.8	3.7	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.5	5.8	5.8	5.8
<b>Recovery of costs permitted by Schedule 1</b>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-0.2	-0.8	-1.0	-1.2
<b>Income permitted by proposals in this public consultation</b>								6.8	7.0
<b>Recovery of costs permitted by proposals in this public consultation</b>								0.0	0.0

# Graph 1: costs of the NRCP (£000s)



Please refer to paragraph 3 which explains the trends indicated by this graph.

# Proposal

4. The following options have been considered:

- A. **do nothing**. Schedule 1 will be unchanged, and charges would be maintained at current levels
- B. **a flat rate 22% increase** to the charges in Schedule 1, applied across all sectors taking part in the NRCP
- C. **a specific percentage increase** tailored for industry sectors based on their specific sampling plans, testing costs and production levels

**Option A** would not achieve full recovery of costs. This option would therefore threaten the viability of the NRCP which is necessary to help protect human health. The NRCP also supports exports of products of animal origin worth £12 billion to the UK economy, and this may become compromised without action.

**Option B** would lead to disproportionate increases in fees for some sectors and ongoing under recovery of costs in others. There are varying production volumes and costs of sampling each sector so, in effect, some sectors would cross-subsidise others.

**Option C** is considered to be the most appropriate and equitable option as it recognises that not all sectors have the same cost profile. This is due to the different sampling and testing arrangements, which are carefully decided each year based on risk assessments and other factors. For example, annual sampling in the bovine sector is proportionally larger than in other sectors, this combined with overall bovine production being lower means costs being spread across fewer carcasses and therefore resulting in a higher per carcass charge. Sampling in other sectors is more proportionally similar.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with our assessment that the most equitable approach to amending Schedule 1 is option C? Please give reasons for your answer.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

5. Table 2 shows the proposed changes to Schedule 1 based on option C. We have used the following assumptions:

- the forecast production levels for each type of animal or animal product are based on an average of 2024 to 2025 levels
- external contracted costs are forecast to increase in line with the inflation each year
- the VMD team with responsibility for managing the NRCP will remain static in size for the next 2 years
- employment costs and overheads are forecast to increase by 5% each year
- the proposed new rates will come into force from Spring 2026 <sup>(10)</sup>

6. Table 3 and Table 4 provide an illustrative example of the likely financial impact of these proposals on a typical sector and on a typical producer in the NRCP.

**Table 2: proposed changes to Schedule 1**

Type of animal or animal product	The Charges for Residues Surveillance (Amendment) Regulations 2024 for charges (£) on or after April 2025	Proposed charges (£) in 2026 - 2027	Actual increase (£)	Proposed charges (£) in 2027 - 2028	Actual increase (£)
Bovine	0.7617 per carcass	0.9964 per carcass	0.2347 per carcass	1.0216 per carcass	0.0252 per carcass
Goat	0.0751 per carcass	0.0864 per carcass	0.0113 per carcass	0.0886 per carcass	0.0022 per carcass
Sheep	0.0751 per carcass	0.0864 per carcass	0.0113 per carcass	0.0886 per carcass	0.0022 per carcass
Soliped	0.4660 per carcass	0.5359 per carcass	0.0699 per carcass	0.5495 per carcass	0.0136 per carcass
Swine	0.0735 per carcass	0.0845 per carcass	0.0110 per carcass	0.0867 per carcass	0.0022 per carcass
Game and wild game	1.0461 per tonne	1.0461 per tonne	0 per tonne	1.0461 per tonne	0 per tonne
Poultry	0.6432 per tonne	0.7397 per tonne	0.0965 per tonne	0.7584 per tonne	0.0187 per tonne
Eggs	0.0206 per case of 360	0.0237 per case of 360	0.0031 per case of 360	0.0243 per case of 360	0.0006 per case of 360
Milk	0.0405 per 1000 litres	0.0466 per 1000 litres	0.0061 per 1000 litres	0.0478 per 1000 litres	0.0012 per 1000 litres
Fish other than trout	2.3546 per tonne of marketed product	2.7078 per tonne of marketed product	0.3532 per tonne of marketed product	2.7764 per tonne of marketed product	0.0686 per tonne of marketed product

Trout	2.8222 per tonne of fish food	3.2455 per tonne of fish food	0.4233 per tonne of fish food	3.3278 per tonne of fish food	0.0823 per tonne of fish food
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**Table 3: an illustrative example of the likely financial impact of the proposals on the bovine sector in the NRCP**

Bovine sector in GB	Value	Comments
Actual 24/25 throughput (the total number of carcasses processed)	2,283,323	
Current charge per carcass as per Schedule 1	£0.7617	
<b>Expected charge to be invoiced to the sector during the 2025 to 2026 financial year</b>	<b>£1,739,207</b>	<b>£1.7m expected charge against the expected 25/26 cost of £2.2m</b>
Proposed rate per carcass 2026 to 2027	£0.9964	
<b>Expected charge to be invoiced to the sector during the 2026 to 2027 financial year</b>	<b>£2,275,103</b>	
Proposed rate per carcass 2027 to 2028	£1.0216	
<b>Expected charge to be invoiced to the sector during the 2027 to 2028 financial year</b>	<b>£2,332,643</b>	Full year charges at the new 2027 to 2028 rate

Based on the assumptions described in paragraph 5, the table shows that the bovine sector would in total pay approximately £2.2million during 2026 to 2027, and approximately £2.3million during 2027 to 2028.

**Table 4: an illustrative example of the likely financial impact of the proposals on a typical bovine processor in the NRCP**

A bovine processor in GB	Value	Comments
Actual 24/25 throughput (the total number of carcasses processed)	102,404	This would be classed as a typical high-volume producer in the NRCP
Current rate per carcass as per Schedule 1	£0.7617	
<b>Expected charge to be invoiced to the processor during the 2025 to 2026 financial year</b>	<b>£78,001</b>	
Proposed rate per carcass 2026 to 2027	£0.9964	
<b>Expected charge to be invoiced to the processor during the 2026 to 2027 financial year</b>	<b>£102,035</b>	
Proposed rate per carcass 2027 to 2028	£1.0216	
<b>Expected charge to be invoiced to the processor during the 2027 to 2028 financial year</b>	<b>£104,616</b>	Full year charges at the 2027 to 2028 proposed rate

Based on the assumptions described in paragraph 5, the table shows that a typical high throughput bovine processor would pay approximately £102,000 during 2026 to 2027, and approximately £105,000 during 2027 to 2028.



# The Expected Impact on Businesses

7. These proposed changes would amend figures of Schedule 1, so as part of this consultation, we are seeking your views on the following questions to help us better understand how the changes may affect stakeholders covered by the scheme:

What impact would you expect the revised rates to have on your profit margins?

- High impact
- Medium impact
- Low impact
- No impact at all
- Don't know

Would you expect to absorb or transfer this additional cost to your customers?

- Absorb
- Transfer
- Other
- None of the above
- Don't know

If you have selected “none of the above” or “other”, please specify what should happen to this additional cost.

How would this fee revision affect the demand for your goods and services?

- Increase demand
- Demand would stay the same
- Decrease demand
- Don't know

## Next Steps

1. After the close of this consultation, the VMD in partnership with the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government will publish a formal government response within the recommended 12-week period.
2. Separate Statutory Instruments would be laid for scrutiny in the UK, Scottish and Welsh Parliaments before the proposed new charges come into force.