

AHVLA News Release

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Unrestricted

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency merge to create new agency

Animal Health and the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) will merge on 1 April 2011 to create the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA).

Both agencies work to combat animal diseases, and bringing together their services, expertise and scientific capability will create a stronger organisation capable of providing a range of vital services to the livestock farming industry and related sectors.

Importantly, the merger will increase the resilience of the combined agency's operations in a difficult financial climate. Joining the two organisations creates new and wider opportunities to identify more cost effective, flexible and robust ways of working.

AHVLA will work across Great Britain on behalf of Defra, the Welsh Assembly Government, and the Scottish Government. It will also have some UK functions and many international roles - for example as the international reference laboratory for important farm animal diseases such as avian influenza, bovine tuberculosis, classical swine fever and TSEs.

Catherine Brown, AHVLA's chief executive, said: "During a time of great pressure on the public purse the merger of Animal Health and the VLA will create a single, more robust, supplier of high quality veterinary services and science, and enhances our ability to respond to animal disease outbreaks.

"We will work to help safeguard animal health and welfare and public health, protect the economy and enhance food security through research, surveillance and inspection.

"We face many challenges, including reduced public expenditure and economic pressures on the industries we support and regulate. Despite this I am confident that by working closely with the livestock industry, veterinary profession and others we will continue to provide many services vital for the future of livestock farming."

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The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, working across Great Britain on behalf of Defra, Scottish Government and Welsh Assembly Government

Ends

Notes:

1. The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency is an executive agency of Defra, and also works on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Government and other government, overseas and private sector organisations.
2. AHVLA will provide laboratory-based scientific and on-farm services, and will be responsible for advising policy-making departments on the delivery aspects and veterinary evidence base for animal health and welfare policy decisions.
3. Key roles will include disease surveillance, advice provision to livestock keepers, facilitating trade in animals, ensuring safe disposal of animal by-products and responding to cases of notifiable disease. The agency will also provide a wide range of applied research and consultancy on livestock diseases, specialised testing, epidemiology and risk assessment services.
4. In addition, AHVLA will work to protect endangered wildlife by regulating the trade in CITES protected species, and will deliver inspections which help to ensure that eggs and milk comply with marketing and hygiene regulations.
5. As of 1 April 2011 the agency employs approximately 3,000 staff across Great Britain. The agency's headquarters will initially be based at Weybridge and Worcester.
6. As the merger is a reorganisation within Defra, it is not expected that there will be significant additional costs as a direct result of the merger. All work to re-brand the agency is being kept to a strict minimum, in line with the Government's marketing and advertising freeze and using in-house resources.

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