

AHVLA News Release

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Unrestricted

AHVLA ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO ITS DELIVERY NETWORK

Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) has announced that in future its laboratory services work will be delivered from fewer locations. This will improve cost effectiveness and efficiency, enabling the Agency to continue to deliver important scientific services to government and the livestock industry within a reduced spending review settlement.

This change does not affect the location of post mortem facilities, the activities currently undertaken by the veterinary investigation officers, or the surveillance programme.

Laboratory services involve testing, research and development work and are currently delivered by scientists based at sixteen sites located across Great Britain. This announcement will mean that work undertaken at the locations specified below will transfer to other AHVLA laboratories during two phases:

1. Phase 1: Thirsk, Truro and Langford (to complete by 31 March 2012)
2. Phase 2: Aberystwyth, Carmarthen, Luddington, Preston, and Winchester (to complete by 31 March 2013)

The laboratory-based work undertaken at these sites will be redistributed amongst the laboratories at Bury St Edmunds, Lasswade, Newcastle, Penrith, Shrewsbury, Starcross, Sutton Bonington, and Weybridge.

AHVLA's veterinary services work, including post mortem examinations, will continue to be provided by all the current regional laboratory sites while a review is undertaken of the best way to deliver this work in the future.

These changes continue work that has taken place over the last several years to increase the specialist focus of individual laboratory sites, ensuring that modern equipment and appropriately trained staff can deliver high quality, accredited laboratory test results. This model, where post mortems are carried out in locations convenient to submitting veterinary practices, and the supporting laboratory testing is carried out off site, is already successfully in use in several surveillance centres.

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Savings arising from these changes are likely to be in the region of £2.4 million per annum.

AHVLA Chief Executive Catherine Brown said, “Reducing the number of sites undertaking laboratory testing will enable us to deliver services of the same high standard at a significantly lower cost. This is due to the professionalism and flexibility of our staff and will be to the benefit of the customers who rely on us for high standard laboratory services, as it makes the service more sustainable for the future.”

Ends

Note to editors:

1. AHVLA is an executive agency of Defra. It works throughout Great Britain on behalf of Defra, the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government and the Food Standards Agency.
2. The Agency was formed on 1 April 2011 following the merger of Animal Health with the Veterinary Laboratories Agency. The Agency’s role is to help safeguard animal health and welfare and public health, protect the economy and enhance food security through research, surveillance and inspection.
3. AHVLA provides a wide range of laboratory service to government, the livestock industry and commercial customers. Most testing and research is primarily focused on animal health and welfare, public health and food safety. Programmes and projects span a wide range of scientific disciplines including:
 - a. Bacteriology
 - b. Emerging diseases
 - c. Food safety
 - d. Notifiable diseases
 - e. Virology
 - f. Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs)
 - g. Wildlife diseases
 - h. Zoonoses
4. The decision to retain the laboratory services work at Bury St Edmunds, Lasswade, Newcastle, Penrith, Shrewsbury, Starcross, Sutton Bonington and Weybridge was based on a number of factors, but assumed the need to continue to deliver the broad range of services currently provided.

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5. These changes do not imply or rely on site closures to generate savings. Just because a site will no longer carry out laboratory testing work it does not mean that it is at risk of closure. Other functions are carried out across AHVLA's laboratory network, for example veterinary surveillance work, and this announcement does not include any changes to these work areas.
6. Opportunities to redeploy staff affected by these changes within AHVLA will be sought, but if necessary voluntary departure terms will be used in order to minimise the need for any compulsory redundancies.

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