Bovine Tuberculosis

Written Answers

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what steps she has taken to keep veterinarians informed on the timetable of her Department's tendering process for testing cattle for tuberculosis.

George Eustice (The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Camborne and Redruth, Conservative)

Since the new model for the supply of veterinary services was announced in July 2013, the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) (previously the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency) has continuously provided detailed information and progress updates through the APHA website, regular Official Veterinarian (OV) newsletter and in specific letters and briefings sent directly to OVs. This information was also provided to veterinary professional bodies such as the British Veterinary Association (BVA), the British Cattle Veterinary Association (BCVA) and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS). APHA provided open fora in both Builth Wells (Wales) and Weybridge (England) in September and October 2013.

An Invitation to Tender was published on 9 July 2014 which included a timetable leading to the announcement on contract awards in January 2015. To further aid potential suppliers, two further clarification days were held in Builth Wells and Weybridge in July and August 2014.

On 6 January 2015, prior to the award of contracts for veterinary services, APHA wrote to the BVA, BCVA and RCVS, to update them on the award process and timescales involved. On 27 January, APHA informed professional bodies and OVs of the award of contracts in Wales and will now work with the contractors to inform veterinarians in Wales of the transitional timetable and arrangements. APHA is not yet in a position to award contracts in England, as this is dependent on the outcome of an ongoing legal process, but has reaffirmed its commitment to providing ongoing information and support to the veterinary profession.

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