8-point plan for surviving a no deal Brexit

As we approach 31 October, a no deal Brexit remains a possibility. Here’s our 8-point plan of practical steps vets can take to get ready for the UK leaving the EU without a deal.

Links to relevant government briefings provide further detail (see below).

Questions? As always, members can contact us with any questions on policy@bva.co.uk or 020 7908 6370.

1. Find out about immigration rules

If you are a non-British EEA national or an employer of non-British EEA nationals, read the step by step guide on the government website for obtaining settled status. The government has also produced a toolkit for employers. If you have specific queries you can contact the BVA legal helpline for free 24/7.

We will continue to lobby for new immigration rules to meet the needs of the veterinary profession, following our successful campaign for vets to be restored to the Shortage Occupation List (which came into effect on 6 October 2019).

2. Advise clients to factor in extra time for pet travel prep

In the event of a no deal Brexit, the UK becomes an unlisted “third country” meaning pets would need additional veterinary certification every time they travel. Pet passports will no longer be valid for entry into, and travel within, the EU.

From 23 October, OVs will need to issue Animal Health Certificates (AHCs) to owners travelling to the EU after 31 October 2019. AHCs are valid for 10 days from their date of issue. The new AHCs will be made available on the APHA Vet Gateway or DAERA website. Pets will require a rabies antibody titration test at least 30 days after vaccination and a waiting period of three months before travel.

You should advise pet owners to start planning as early as possible. Vets can send blood samples to one of the EU-approved laboratories: APHA Weybridge and Biobest in Edinburgh. More information is available in this Defra FAQ on rabies serology tests. The UK will continue to allow entry for pets travelling with an EU pet passport issued in the EU or in the UK prior to Brexit.

Read the government advice on pet travel after Brexit.

3. Advise horse owners to start planning for equine movements

In the event of a no deal Brexit, the Tripartite Agreement would be revoked, and the UK becomes a “third country”. The UK secured listed status from the EU Commission on 11 October, meaning the movement of horses into the EU can continue. However, horses will need an export health certificate, which might mean additional tests, and will have to pass through a Border Inspection Post approved for equids. Exporters should check the list of existing BIPs in the EU and consider how to redirect their route if necessary. Vets should be advising owners to factor this into any planning for equine movements.

4. Talk to your medicine suppliers

Medicines that have previously been authorised for veterinary use in the UK by the European Medicines Agency will remain authorised. For products that are authorised for the UK via the mutual recognition or decentralised procedure, their use in the UK is allowed via a national authorisation.

NOAH and its members have worked with the VMD to undertake contingency planning and procurement forecasts to ensure the supply chain is ready to respond. The government has confirmed that veterinary medicines are classed as "category 1" goods, which would be prioritised if there was disruption at the border after a no deal Brexit, and that supply is expected to cope with a normalised ordering pattern. Speak to your suppliers to ensure any potential supply issues are identified at the earliest opportunity. Advise your clients to plan ahead for repeat prescriptions.

5. Continue to use the cascade and special import certificates

In the event of no deal, the cascade/special import scheme will need to be revised to reflect that the UK
is no longer a Member State, but the VMD has advised that this will not affect a vet’s ability to import human or veterinary medicines from outside of the UK, subject to the usual clinical/cascade need.

6. Stay up to date on requirements for veterinary certification

It’s estimated that veterinary certification requirements for trade could increase significantly so it is essential that vets are up to date with revalidation requirements. Stay up to date on the requirements and talk to your clients about their anticipated needs in the future. Updated Export Health Certificates are available on the Defra form finder or DAERA website.

7. Keep up to date with surveillance reports via Vet Record

In the event of no deal the UK loses access to the EU disease surveillance system ADNS (the Animal Disease Notification System). However, the UK will maintain access to the OIE World Animal Health Information System and essential surveillance information will continue to be cascaded via Vet Record surveillance reports. This is particularly pertinent for the control of emerging or re-emerging disease conditions, and in the interactions between private vets, government, and our laboratory network in contingency planning for epizootic disease outbreaks.

8. Explore research opportunities internationally

The government has committed to guarantee funding for Horizon 2020 projects. Vets involved with collaborative research projects should maintain good communications with EU collaborators and Horizon 2020 National Contact Points (NCPs). Veterinary researchers should also scope other international opportunities and consider drawing on partnering opportunities through the government’s Science and Innovation Network (SIN).

Northern Ireland

Members living and working in Northern Ireland are in a unique position. We are in contact with DAERA and the Chief Veterinary Officer, who is working with the veterinary profession in Northern Ireland to prepare for Brexit. We will be updating members as we receive further information.

Relevant government no deal Brexit briefings:

- Horizon 2020 funding after Brexit
- Farm payments
- Zootechnical rules and standards
- Exporting animals and animal products
- Importing animals and animal product
- Exporting GM food and animal feed
- Trading and moving endangered species protected by CITES
- Food labelling
- Producing and processing organic food
- FSA guidance for meat, fish and dairy products
- Veterinary medicines
- Taking your pet abroad
- Taking horses abroad
- Workplace rights
- APHA Export Instructions Updates

For more information, please contact BVA policy team on 020 7908 6370 or policy@bva.co.uk