





quickly. We trust her professional judgement as a veterinary surgeon to undertake this role. However, we do not believe this is a long-term solution to managing animal health risk.

16. Import checks form a line of defence to help protect against diseases not currently present in the UK, such as African Swine Fever. Therefore, we should not see a further delay in the introduction of these basic biosecurity and food safety measures. Going forward, there needs to be greater planning and engagement with the veterinary profession to ensure capacity is in place to meet the requirements.

## **How prepared are British food and farming sector businesses, border posts and the Government for the introduction of further checks from 1 July 2022? What will be the impact of these extra checks?**

17. We are mindful that the delivery of border controls is a devolved matter, therefore the below points are relevant for the Welsh and Scottish Governments as well as Defra.

### **Veterinary capacity**

18. Our profession has faced a triple whammy of Brexit, Covid, and the boom in pet ownership, which have put unprecedented pressure on veterinary services across the country. How the UK will find the required veterinary capacity to fulfil increasing demands is unknown.
19. The UK will require a veterinary workforce with the capability and capacity necessary to facilitate international trade both with the EU and other trade partners. To continue to trade, the UK must have enough appropriately trained Official Veterinarians (OV) to meet the additional demands for exports and imports. If that requirement is not fulfilled, it will present a significant barrier to trade and limit any opportunities for the farming and food sectors.
20. There will be a need for enough OVs to perform sanitary controls as these are phased in for imports into Great Britain from the EU. As yet, we have not seen a government workforce analysis that estimates the total number of OVs, or full-time equivalents, that will be needed to undertake this work.
21. We can learn from the recent experience of the EU. The Irish Government was preparing “in the region of 200 extra full-time staff to carry out Sanitary and Phytosanitary Controls (SPS) checks and controls at ports and airports.”<sup>5</sup> A sizeable number of this cadre will be OVs, but there will be phytosanitary staff and support staff included in this number. In the Netherlands, there were plans, reported in 2018, for an additional 145 veterinarians for the Port of Rotterdam ahead of a previous potential no deal.<sup>6</sup> Despite these plans, in August 2021 there was a four-day delay for British meat shipments to the port of Rotterdam due to a lack of OVs.<sup>7</sup>
22. In January 2021, Defra provided £14 million in England to support recruitment and training of over 500 new staff, including OVs.<sup>8</sup> These OVs will be employed by public health authorities (PHAs), either directly or indirectly, or by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA).
23. The UK is highly reliant on EU vets. Yet, as the demands on veterinary capacity have increased, there has been a constraint on new veterinary surgeons entering the UK from the EU. It is vital to consider the impact of meeting these additional demands without a corresponding increase in the number of veterinary surgeons in the UK.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.thejournal.ie/ireland-customs-veterinary-brexit-4135182-Jul2018/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/sep/22/rotterdam-prepared-for-worst-after-brex>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.euromeatnews.com/Article-Lack-of-vets-delays-British-meat-exports-to-the->

Providing a workforce to deliver these new requirements may mean pulling vets away from other essential activities.

24. The operation of veterinary functions must become more efficient, and the use of allied professionals will be vital to achieving that aim. Consideration is being given to



