

Animal Welfare Team
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Area 8B
9 Millbank, c/o 17 Smith Square
London,
SW1P 3JR



Telephone: 020 7238 5948

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15 June 2011

Dear Consultee

CONSULTATION ON REFORMING THE GB ANIMAL WELFARE INSPECTION REGIME

I am writing to invite views on the proposals in the attached consultation document to reform the animal welfare inspection regime in Great Britain to reduce the likelihood of inspection to farms at low-risk of non-compliance with animal welfare legislation.

Animal welfare on farms is currently monitored and enforced officially by Government delivery bodies (the Animal Health & Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) and local authorities), predominantly on a risk basis. Many of the proposals put forward to achieve this reform involve changes to the risk inspection model used by AHVLA for inspections to claimants under cross compliance regulations. AHVLA operates on a GB basis. Hence this is a joint consultation involving Defra, the Welsh Government (WG) and the Scottish Government (SG).

Main proposal

The main proposal set out in the consultation document is that membership of a farm assurance scheme or certification under an organic scheme, should be included as a criteria in AHVLA's risk model for allocating inspections to claimants under cross compliance regulations for 2012 and beyond. This proposal is supported by research, commissioned by Defra and WG and carried out by the University of Warwick in 2010, which showed that farms which are members of farm assurance schemes or certification under an organic scheme, should be considered for inclusion in the risk model as a reduced risk.

Such an approach applies the principle of "earned recognition" as put forward in the recently published report by the independent Farming Regulation Task Force¹. Earned recognition requires regulators to use private sector information and other personal evidence to assess risk and therefore the need for the state or its agents to inspect. Recognition is "earned" because it rewards the effective efforts of individuals or businesses to improve knowledge, competence or standards.

¹ <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/05/17/pb13527farming-reg-report/>



Other proposals

The consultation document describes other potential criteria for AHVLA's risk model. It is proposed that these are considered for possible future inclusion in the risk model (2013 and beyond) where robust supportive evidence is found.

There is scope to achieve further efficiencies in animal welfare inspections through, for example, the use of risk-based decision tools, the sharing of information and by taking a more joined-up approach to inspections both at Government level and wider. All of these initiatives will help to reduce burdens on farmers, and will make better use of Government resources. The consultation document gives examples of where this has already started to happen and considers avenues for future exploration.

Impact Assessment

An impact assessment has not been prepared. This is because proposed changes to the AHVLA risk model for allocating inspections will not result in a change in the overall level of regulatory activity. Although there will be costs to the public sector in terms of changes to the IT specification, these will be well below the threshold of £5 million. There are potential savings around efficiencies in inspections but ideas are not sufficiently developed to allow any meaningful assessment to be carried out at this stage. The benefits and drawbacks of each proposal are set out in the consultation document.

Documentation

The following documents may be found on Defra's website.

- Consultation letter
- Consultation document with annexes
- Appendix 1: AW0510 Farm Assurance research project
- List of consultees

Responses

We welcome your views and comments on the proposals, in particular your response to the questions set out in the consultation document which are summarised in Annex A.

The list of consultees is not intended to be inclusive – we welcome comments from anyone. So if you consider that there is an organisation, or individual, not listed then please make them aware of this consultation exercise.

Please send responses to either:

Alison Maydom
Defra
Animal Welfare Team
Area 8B
9 Millbank c/o 17 Smith Square,
London, W1P 3JR.
Telephone: 020 7238 5815
Or email: animalwelfareconsultations@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Responses should be received by **27 July 2011**.

Consultation Criteria

This consultation is in line with the Code of Practice on Consultations. This can be found at: www.bis.gov.uk/policies/better-regulation/consultation-guidance

When this consultation ends, we intend to put a copy of the responses in the Defra library at Ergon House, London. This is so that the public can see them. Also, members of the public may ask for a copy of responses under freedom of information legislation.

If you do not want your response - including your name, contact details and any other personal information – to be publicly available, please say so clearly in writing when you send your response to the consultation. Please note, if your computer automatically includes a confidentiality disclaimer, that won't count as a confidentiality request.

Please explain why you need to keep details confidential. We will take your reasons into account if someone asks for this information under freedom of information legislation. But, because of the law, we cannot promise that we will always be able to keep those details confidential.

We will summarise all responses and place this summary on our website at: www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/06/15/animal-welfare/. This summary will include a list of names of organisations that responded but not people's personal names, addresses or other contact details.

To see consultation responses and summaries, please contact the library at:

Defra
Information Resource Centre
Lower Ground Floor
Ergon House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR
Telephone: 020-7238-6575
Email: defra.library@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Please give the library 24 hours' notice. There is a charge for photocopying and postage.

If you have any comments or complaints about the consultation process, please address them to Rhonda Marshall, Defra's Consultation Co-ordinator, Area 7C Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London SW1P 3JR, or email consultation.coordinator@defra.gsi.gov.uk.

Thank you for your help in this matter. If you have any queries please contact us as above.

Yours faithfully

Alison Maydom

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs