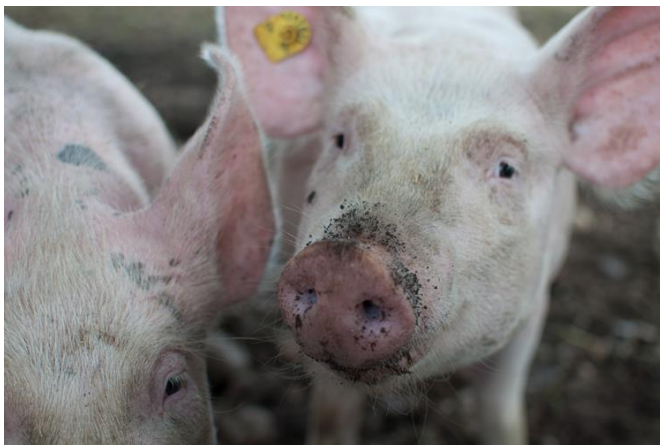




Norfolk County Council

Community & Environmental Services

Annex 3: Trading Standards Service Delivery of Animal Health & Welfare Framework 2023-24



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Delivery of Animal Health and Welfare Framework 2023-24

County councils, metropolitan boroughs and unitary authorities in England have a statutory duty to help local communities comply with laws to prevent the spread of animal disease and protect the welfare of animals. It is compliance with these laws that gives our farming industry the freedom to trade freely and thrive, ensuring that the food we eat is safe and as described, shaping our countryside and making a major contribution to local economies.

The agriculture sector is a major industry in Norfolk and is synonymous with the character of the county. 9%¹ of active enterprises in Norfolk are in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector. The total farm labour force is large with 11,838¹ people employed on commercial holdings. In comparison with other local authority areas, the county has one of the largest livestock populations of commercial poultry (16,945,780¹) and pigs (787,583¹) in the United Kingdom.

Central and local government partners have produced an updated [Animal Health and Welfare Framework](#)² that offers local authorities a set of practical principles to help deliver duties under animal health and welfare legislation in a way that:

- Is responsive and accountable to local communities;
- Is focused on high risk activities to make best use of limited resources;
- Recognises why national consistency is important for businesses, the public and to protect against animal disease;
- Delivers controls in a way that supports European and international trade agreements;
- Promotes collaborative working.

The Framework is a partnership agreement that aims to increase mutual understanding and collaboration between the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and local authorities in relation to animal health and welfare work. It includes responsibilities for all partners to achieve this. The table on the following pages outlines the responsibilities for Norfolk County Council Trading Standards and how these are achieved.

¹2022 Office of National Statistics figure from [Structure of the agricultural industry in England and the UK at June](#)

²Produced in partnership between [Defra](#), [the Animal Plant Health Agency \(APHA\)](#), the [Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers \(ACTSO\)](#) and the National Animal Health and Welfare Panel (NAHWP). It is supported by the [Local Government Association \(LGA\)](#).

Responsibilities of Local Authorities

Action Required 1

Undertake annual service planning based on the principles in the Animal Health and Welfare Framework.

Planned Service Delivery 1

This document, outlining the responsibilities of local authorities under the Animal Health and Welfare Framework, is included as an annex to the Trading Standards Service Plan. Safeguarding the standards of animal health and welfare and responding to and reducing the risk of animal disease outbreaks and associated risks to the Norfolk economy and public health is a defined priority action in the Service Plan and the Trading Standards service's control strategy.

Action Required 2

Develop a risk based, consistent and accessible process for responding to complaints relating to animal health matters on farms.

Planned Service Delivery 2

The actions of the Service are informed by the Community & Environmental Services (CES) Compliance & Enforcement Policy. The policy includes reference to the Farm Regulators' Charter and the Regulators' Code.

The service has adopted the Intelligence Operating Model (IOM) to direct its activities and prioritise its resources. Safeguarding the standards of animal health and welfare and responding to and reducing the risk of animal disease outbreaks and associated risks to the Norfolk economy and public health is a defined priority action of the service's control strategy and activities take account of local, regional, and national priorities.

The service operates a duty system where all matters that have the potential to require further action, including complaints relating to animal health matters on farms, are reviewed by a Lead Trading Standards Officer. If further action is required, the Lead Trading Standards Officer allocates matters to qualified/competent staff, providing handling instructions to ensure a consistent approach. Within the general process, the service has a number of guidance documents, which have been developed to aid the duty team to respond consistently to animal health and welfare complaints, including:

- a flow diagram for allocating animal health matters
- a step-by-step guide to dealing with illegally imported animals
- a guide for dealing with alleged breaches of the requirements of avian influenza controls
- a guide for dealing with multiple animal welfare issues/complaints relating to the same keeper
- guidance on how to deal with abattoir and welfare in transport notifications
- a TB work instruction, and
- instructions for dealing with missing ear tag referrals.

Action Required 3

Provide transparency about how the local authority responds to animal welfare complaints, including collaborative arrangements with other partners and charities.

Planned Service Delivery 3

As outlined in 2 above, the service's standard policy and protocols for handling referrals and complaints include our response to animal welfare complaints.

The CES Compliance & Enforcement Policy and the Trading Standards Service Plan, including this framework annex are published.

The service has an information exchange protocol with Norfolk Constabulary and has information sharing agreements with Citizens Advice and World Horse Welfare. In addition, the Service has memoranda of understanding with:

- the East of England Trading Standards Association (EETSA), to enable the use of a shared intelligence database
- Suffolk Trading Standards, to share resources in the event of an animal disease outbreak or major animal welfare event
- the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) (facilitated for the service by the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers (ACTSO)), outlining roles and responsibilities to deal with the safe disposal of anthrax carcasses.

Referral handling instructions, covering matters including animal welfare complaints, are maintained for Citizens Advice and Norfolk Police.

Where appropriate, the Service will arrange joint visits with Veterinary Officers (VO) from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) to investigate welfare complaints.

Where a complaint raises serious welfare concerns the service will seek to investigate the matter within 24 hours of receipt.

Liaison is also maintained with other appropriate agencies to try and establish if the subject of the complaint is the subject of any other complaints/investigations, so a consensus on how to move forward can be agreed.

Action Required 4

Identify high risk businesses and activities on an annual basis.

Planned Service Delivery 4

The service uses a business risk assessment scheme based on that promoted by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and has adopted the National Trading Standards Intelligence Operating Model (IOM) to inform its activities and prioritise its resources. The service uses available intelligence sources to risk-assess businesses and identify high risk businesses and activities on an ongoing basis. This informs our priority activities outlined in our control strategy and informs tasking and coordination decisions.

Action Required 5

Produce an annual programme of interventions for all high-risk businesses and activities based on the risk presented by the activities carried out, intelligence, history of compliance and available resources.

Planned Service Delivery 5

The service produces an annual programme of interventions for all identified high risk businesses. In producing the programme, the service considers factors including risk, compliance history, local, regional and national priorities and any other available intelligence.

Progress against targets (for interventions carried out) is monitored monthly by the Trading Standards Management Team via reports provided by Lead Trading Standards Officers.

Action Required 6

Undertake an annual audit of each livestock market and collection centre in partnership with APHA to review documentation and procedures. Produce an annual programme of interventions based on the outcomes of the audit, which remains flexible to changing risk through the year.

Planned Service Delivery 6

There are one livestock market and two poultry sales operating in Norfolk (although poultry sales have not been operating due to prevailing Avian Influenza outbreaks and controls) and the service regularly liaises with the market operators.

The service works with officers from APHA to undertake the annual audit of the livestock market, reviewing the market premises and their systems, processes and documented arrangements. This audit informs our agreed programme of interventions with the market, which is fed into our annual intervention programme, as outlined in 5 above.

Action Required 7

Actively engage in regional animal health and welfare groups, attending meetings where possible and contributing to regional discussions about the implementation of the Framework. Ensure membership of the KHub.

Planned Service Delivery 7

The Service contributes significantly to regional and national groups. A Lead Trading Standards Officer with a Service Lead role in animal health and welfare was, for a considerable time, the chair of the East of England Trading Standards Authorities (EETSA) Animal Health and Welfare Regional Group and remains an active member of that group. This lead officer was also a member of the National Animal Health and Welfare Panel and sits on the National Equine Liaison Group. At the time of writing, the officer also sits on the National Outbreak Enforcement Group that has been set up during the prevailing Avian Influenza outbreak affecting large parts of the region (and country), including Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex.

The EETSA regional group is active, and members support each other with the mutual provision of information and advice to ensure a consistent approach to the application/interpretation of legislation.

The EETSA regional group also maintains a close working relationship with the National Animal Health and Welfare Panel. Officers of the service are members of the Animal Health and Welfare group on Knowledge Hub (KHub) (a public service digital platform).

Action Required 8

Work closely with other local authorities to share knowledge and expertise, including opportunities for shared training, joint inspections, opportunities for contracting and peer to peer reviews.

Planned Service Delivery 8

In addition to that outlined in 7 above, the service has an ongoing commitment to work closely with Suffolk Trading Standards. The service has agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with Suffolk Trading Standards to enable sharing of resources (including cross border authorisation arrangements) to respond to animal disease outbreaks and animal health and welfare issues. Other collaborative working areas with Suffolk Trading Standards include collaborative intelligence functions, shared best practice, a common compliance & enforcement policy and shared learning and development activities.

The EETSA Animal Health and Welfare Group has provided and maintains a regional store of equipment to facilitate responses to breaches of the legislation controlling rabies.

Action Required 9

Proactively exchange and use information and intelligence to inform the delivery of animal health and welfare controls, using national intelligence databases where appropriate.

Planned Service Delivery 9

As outlined in 3 and 4 above the service has adopted a number of information sharing agreements/protocols and memoranda of understanding, and the National Trading Standards Intelligence Operating Model (IOM).

All operational officers have access to the national intelligence database, IDB, and are encouraged to make submissions and review IDB intelligence in relation to their activities.

The service employs an Intelligence Lead and an Intelligence Technical Support Officer to support and facilitate our intelligence led approach. The Intelligence Lead scrutinises all incoming complaints, received via the Citizens Advice portal, and partner referrals, such as those from APHA, all of which are received via trading.standards@norfolk.gov.uk.

On a day-to-day basis, if the Intelligence Lead receives any intelligence that raises a concern relating to a matter that has the potential to be a cross border issue this matter is sent to the EETSA Regional Intelligence Analyst (RIA) for further dissemination.

Each month the Intelligence Lead produces a tactical assessment for the Tasking and Coordination meeting. This assessment includes analysis (from IDB and Civica Cx) by subject area including "Animal Disease Control Measures", the level of IDB submissions and horizon scanning for areas of concern. The report also highlights the level of use of IDB by individual officers via their last timed login.

The Intelligence Lead and Animal Health Officers of the service have given training to Norfolk Constabulary Control Room staff on Trading Standards matters, including those relating to animal health. The Intelligence Lead and an Animal Health Officer from the Service attend the Norfolk CRAG (Crime Rural Advisory Group) meetings. These measures have and will improve the channels of communication and sharing of intelligence relating to matters concerning animal health and welfare.

As outlined in the Service's 2023/24 Strategic Assessment document, Norfolk Trading Standards has recorded more animal health intelligence on IDB than any other authority in the EETSA region and is eleventh highest for all UK authorities in the category.

Action Required 10

Regional groups to discuss and agree how each local authority will be involved in the recording, accessing and analysis of intelligence relating to animal health and welfare with the aim of making a staged improvement in the level and quality of intelligence recorded and the influence this has on service planning across the region.

Planned Service Delivery 10

The Regional Intelligence Analyst (RIA) for the EETSA region has previously attended a meeting of the EETSA Animal Health and Welfare regional group and given advice on how to improve the quality and frequency of intelligence recording on the national intelligence database, IDB, relating to animal health and welfare matters. The EETSA regional group maintains communication with the EETSA RIA.

As mentioned in 9 above the service currently records more animal health intelligence on IDB than any other authority in the region.

Action Required 11

Each regional group to review the level of intelligence being recorded and use the intelligence to identify any potential threats on at least an annual basis. Steps should be taken to resolve any concerns about the level or type of intelligence being recorded and a response be formulated to any criminal activity that has been identified.

Planned Service Delivery 11

As per 10 above the EETSA Regional Intelligence Analyst (RIA) has previously attended the EETSA Animal Health and Welfare regional group and given advice on how to improve the quality and frequency of intelligence recording on IDB relating to animal health and welfare matters.

The RIA will also highlight any concerns about the level or type of intelligence being recorded within the region. Such concerns are disseminated through senior management meetings within EETSA.

The EETSA RIA produces an annual strategic assessment document that includes reference to the regional and national priorities.

As mentioned in 9 above the service currently records more animal health intelligence on IDB than any other authority in the region.

Action Required 12

All local authorities should actively engage in the sharing of environmental, political, legislative or organisational changes at regional meetings that may influence service planning and activities.

Planned Service Delivery 12

Such information is shared at the EETSA Animal Health and Welfare regional group. It is also shared at the EETSA Senior Management Group meetings, where progress of the agreed EETSA regional animal health and welfare workstream is reviewed on a quarterly

basis. Issues of particular strategic importance are also discussed at EETSA Heads of Service meetings.

In addition, as outlined in 8 above, such information is shared with Suffolk Trading Standards through a programme of collaborative working including collaborative intelligence functions, shared best practice, a common compliance & enforcement policy and shared learning and development activities.

Action Required 13

Ensure that services consider the requirements laid down in the On Farm Charter and Regulators' Code where appropriate.

Planned Service Delivery 13

The Community and Environmental Services (CES) Compliance & Enforcement Policy has been devised with due regard to the Regulators' Code and the Farm Regulators' Charter and both documents are referenced in that policy.

Action Required 14

All services should consider how they meet EU standards for the delivery of Official Controls and any future standards that support trade agreements.

Planned Service Delivery 14

The service is aware of the requirements of Article 6 of 2017/625 (as amended) and the requirement to have transparent and accountable audit processes in place.

The service has an annual programme of internal audits that can deal with all aspects of service delivery. If the need arises this programme would include an audit of official controls.

Officers who undertake animal health and welfare activities must maintain a level of competency. The service has devised a definition of competency (including required qualifications) for this area of delivery. Officers must complete a learning and development log form where they evidence competency. This evidence can include reference to work completed (including the handling of reactive complaints). This log form is reviewed by line managers at least twice a year. Demonstration of competency is linked to the service's warrant issue process. Our modular approach to warrants means that we can add or revoke service delivery areas in officers' warrants in line with their individual competency review.

Individual officers are also subject to the Council's performance management framework with annual goal setting and performance monitoring against those goals occurring at regular intervals during the year. In addition, line managers routinely quality monitor work undertaken by officers and give feedback as part of their 1-2-1 meetings.

As outlined in 15 below, the service provides national returns as per the government's single data list, including mandatory returns relating to official control delivery.

The service has a number of performance measures that are reported to Councillors and senior managers of the council. These performance measures, which can include aspects of official control delivery, are reviewed against target on a monthly basis by the Trading Standards Management Team.

As stated in 4 above, the service has adopted the National Trading Standards Intelligence Operating Model (IOM). This helps to manage prioritised threats and identified risks

through enforcement and other activities, as well as reviewing the effectiveness of measures taken.

Norfolk County Council also carries out audits of services within its organisation to ensure compliance with, for example, financial controls.

The service is monitoring and horizon scanning to keep up to date with any potential issues as a result of EU exit, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement signed with the EU and other international trade agreements.

Action Required 15

Complete statutory data returns in a timely manner.

Planned Service Delivery 15

The service has a programme, outlining all the required national and regional statutory returns, which is monitored for progress. This programme includes the statutory animal health returns such as the annual return relating to inspections carried out under the Welfare of Animals (Transport) (England) Order and the bi-annual return relating to the number of animal health prosecutions.

Action Required 16

Each local authority must have an up to date animal disease contingency plan in place, which is shared internally and with partners. Contact details are to be revised as changes happen. The plan should be updated within two years of any changes to the national template.

Planned Service Delivery 16

This Service has an Exotic Notifiable Animal Disease Contingency Plan based on the current national template (which is produced by the National Animal Health and Welfare Panel and the Association of Chief Trading Standards Officers). The Service's plan was updated to reflect improvements made to operational practice during the response to the five outbreaks of avian influenza that occurred in Norfolk in December 2020. A similar "lessons learnt" exercise will be undertaken following the Service's response to the 65 Avian Influenza outbreaks that have occurred during this service year.

A separate Exotic Notifiable Animal Disease Contingency Plan for Norfolk Resilience Forum (NRF) Partners is also in place.

Action Required 17

Local authorities should ensure that contact details on the Local Authority Master Contact List are updated in a timely fashion. This information is used by APHA to communicate details of possible animal disease outbreaks, make referrals and share intelligence.

Planned Service Delivery 17

The list of Norfolk contacts is currently up to date. The Senior Manager within the Service with responsibility for animal health and welfare is responsible for ensuring the currency of the information provided to the Master Contact List.

Action Required 18

Officers involved in the delivery of animal health and welfare controls should be trained and qualified in line with local standards and authorisation processes. Local processes should ensure officers are competent in the delivery of effective animal health and welfare controls. As with all responsible employers, local authorities should support staff with personal development processes and training. These principles are reflected in [Article 5\(4\) of Retained EU Regulation 2017/625](#)

Planned Service Delivery 18

The service's approach to ensuring officers are qualified, maintain their competency and are suitably authorised is outlined in 14 above.

In addition, as part of the annual service planning process, a learning and development plan is produced. This includes input from Lead Trading Standards Officers, including those who have a specialist lead in animal health and welfare matters, to ensure that required courses and briefings for the forthcoming service year are provided to line managers for discussion at proposed attendees' personal development plan discussions. Lead Trading Standards Officers are also responsible for ensuring that learning and development requirements are identified on an ongoing basis and are delivered.

Action Required 19

Use the Framework to promote the delivery of animal health and welfare controls to managers and local politicians.

Planned Service Delivery 19

The annual Trading Standards Service Plan includes as an annex this document relating to the Animal Health and Welfare Framework Agreement. This plan is reviewed and agreed by the Trading Standards Management Team and then put forward for approval by members of the Council's Cabinet.