

## Animal and Plant Health Agency

# Extra mural studies (EMS)

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## 1. EMS for veterinary students

EMS is a mandatory requirement for all veterinary students, mainly in the latter clinical part of their degree course. EMS can provide students with practical experience in veterinary medicine, in a wide variety of different career areas, including the private, public and third sectors. Veterinary students must complete a minimum number of EMS weeks per year in their clinical years.

## 2. Unique opportunities at APHA

APHA provides unique opportunities for students to develop veterinary professional skills with a focus on State Veterinary Medicine, including diagnostic services and policy making. Students can work with government vets. We offer placements of up to two weeks; during that time, you can work in a variety of different locations and disciplines.

## 3. Eligibility

Veterinary students who are UK citizens are automatically eligible from the summer before their final two years of study begin. This includes UK citizens studying in other EU countries. Non-UK students studying at UK universities can also apply, but require slightly more evidence of the value of APHA EMS.

## 4. EMS experiences at APHA

The application form provides more information on all aspects of the experience offered. Below are the different types of placements you can experience with APHA:

- **Field Operations**

Veterinary and technical staff work at all sites offering this; some offices also have administrative staff. You can expect to get involved in work associated with disease control, including bovine TB, and animal welfare, either responding to complaints or carrying out routine inspections. As a regulatory organisation, a lot of the work done is based on legislation, so you will have a chance to see how APHA puts the law into action. In most cases, you will spend the majority of your placement out of the office, on farms and at other locations, accompanying a vet or a technical officer. You may be required to use your own vehicle to get to various farms or field stations, as some sites cover very wide geographic areas. The EMS Administrator will confirm if this is necessary prior to arranging a placement. All field placements at Bury St Edmunds require use of own transport. When you use your own vehicle you will be also required to obtain Business Class insurance cover. Please contact your insurance company to check arrangements; extra payment is not always required, depending on the policy. At the start of the

placement it will be necessary to provide evidence of your driving documents (licence, insurance and MOT). Expenses are not paid by APHA.

- **Laboratories**

Vets at these sites carry out scanning surveillance; searching for new and emerging diseases in farm animals, and providing a diagnostic service to practitioners. You can expect to see a wide range of post mortems on livestock, and occasionally wildlife and exotic animals. Most sites also receive diagnostic samples by post, and you can participate in checking samples for suitability, assigning tests and, depending on location, setting up and interpreting the test procedures. Farm visits are carried out occasionally, to investigate unusual cases, but most of your time will be spent in the lab or post mortem room.

- **Specialist Service Centres**

Our International Trade Centre in Carlisle concentrates on dealing with all aspects of import and export of animals and animal products. Documents required for export are issued here; health certificates, together with notes for guidance are produced, allowing a huge range of animals and products to be moved around the world. This is an office-based experience. You can expect to learn a great deal about international co-operation, certification and monitoring of animal movements. The Centre deals with veterinary authorities across the world.

- **Live Animal Border Inspection Post**

A small number of places are available at the live animal Border Inspection Post at Heathrow airport. This office deals with animals arriving and leaving by air; and it is a very busy location, you can expect to learn about the complex requirements associated with international trade.

- **Animal Science Unit, Weybridge**

Placements at the Weybridge site will offer an insight into work carried out under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 as well as spending time in the pathology department and research laboratories. You will have the opportunity to learn about veterinary involvement in welfare, ethical review processes and the role of the Named Veterinary Surgeon. This placement comprises of a mixture of work with animals, office-based reviews and time in the laboratory. You may be interested in the following link: <http://www.lava.uk.net/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=6> which provides information about the LAVA EMS scheme.

- **Veterinary Science Advice Teams Working with Policy Makers**

Veterinary advisers work closely with policy teams, to ensure that our policies for dealing with animal disease and welfare are based on sound evidence and scientific facts. The vets also deal with reports of suspected notifiable disease, co-ordinating our response and

providing guidance to the staff on farm. This will be an office-based experience; you will discover how veterinary and scientific expertise is used to influence legislation and Government policy in Defra, Scottish Government, Welsh Government, Food Standards Agency, Home Office and Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

Placements are for one week, based in Nobel House, London. Dates will be confirmed with universities and any students wishing to be considered for one of these placements should contact the EMS mailbox and provide details. It is highly recommended that a session with Advice Services is complemented by an APHA site placement, to ensure the student gains both policy and operational experience.

## 5. How to apply for a placement

- E-mail the [EMS@APHA.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:EMS@APHA.gsi.gov.uk) mailbox requesting an application form
- Request an application form from your EMS co-ordinator

The EMS administrator will review all applications, taking in to account the date of final qualifying exams, sites requested and available dates. Application forms will be acknowledged and the administrator will contact the requested site(s), asking them if they can accommodate the student.

If the application is accepted, the administrator will tell you that a place is available. You can expect contact three months before the placement starts, to complete the mandatory health clearance questionnaires and sign the Official Secrets Act. If the first choice of date or location is unavailable then the administrator will tell you, and you can make an alternative decision.

## 6. Cancelling a placement

Yes. Please advise the EMS administrator as soon as possible who will notify the site; then the cancelled placement can be re-allocated to another student.

## 7. Health clearance

APHA has an official responsibility to protect you from exposure to health risks, and needs to make a balanced decision before accepting you on an EMS placement. For example, if you were immune-compromised, we would avoid sending you on visits to premises where a zoonosis was suspected.

Any allergies or intolerances need to be declared, particularly if your issue relates to allergens likely to be encountered on farms or in laboratories (for example, farmer's lung, specific animal allergies, intolerance to formalin).

For field placements, you need a reasonable degree of fitness, as you may need to walk considerable distances to access the animals.

For field perspective any lab placements, you will need evidence of tetanus vaccination. If your placement is at the ASU in Weybridge, you will also need evidence of BCG vaccination. BCG vaccination is recommended, but not obligatory, for other field or lab placements.

## **8. Obtaining a BCG vaccination for an ASU Weybridge placement**

You will not be able to attend the placement if you do not get a BCG vaccine at least six weeks before your start date at Weybridge. Contact the administrator if you are struggling with this requirement.

## **9. The Official Secrets Act**

During your placement, you will have access to information which is protected by law: you need to agree not to exploit that access before you can undertake EMS with us. For example, if you visited a premises owned by someone who was famous, you would not be allowed to use this information outside of the APHA environment. You might also have access to financial information, such as farm subsidy payments, and, again, you would not be legally allowed to benefit from this information.

## **10. Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)**

For farm and lab sites, you might prefer to use your own wellies; however, all PPE will be provided, including disposable boiler suits and gloves. At some sites, steel toe capped footwear is required.

## **11. Transport during a placement**

Our field offices often cover enormous geographical areas: to make the best use of your time and ours, it is preferable if you have a vehicle available. Placements at Bury St Edmunds require a vehicle, for this very reason. Having a vehicle means that you can meet your APHA contact at the premises, which will inevitably increase the variety of visits you can undertake. If you are using your own vehicle, please check with your insurance company: there may be a charge.

Lab and office-based placements do not require you to have a vehicle.

## **12. Accidents / incidents and Crown Immunity**

Students visiting APHA on EMS placements are not covered by public liability insurance. As APHA is a crown body, it has Crown Immunity Liability is covered, except in the case of negligence.

## **13. Careers with APHA and in Veterinary Public Health**

Veterinary public health is important: the animals we contact, the food we eat, the birds that fly over us and the products that we use are all potential causes of problems. APHA also deals with the animal welfare issues identified on farm; some lead to prosecutions, and some to warnings, but we strive to improve animal welfare on a daily basis.

You can be a part of that: you can work with us.

Once qualified, you will probably want to work in practice. Whether you work in the UK or abroad, you will need to be aware of the legislative aspects of animal disease and welfare control. All countries have a framework of control, and our model is exemplary.

If you want to consider a non-practice career, the work of APHA might be the solution you are seeking. We accept new graduates, and remember that even if you don't work for APHA, a career in veterinary medicine in GB might lead you to working with us at some time, whether on export work, disease control or animal welfare.