Animal & Plant Health Agency

Animal and Plant Health Agency
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[redacted]
{By Email}

Our Ref: ATIC1075

8 May 2017

Dear [redacted]

PROVISION OF REQUESTED INFORMATION

Thank you for your request for information about imports of fox based biological substances, which we received on 14 April 2017. Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The information you requested and our response is detailed below:

"This is a freedom of information request relating to the period 2003 to current date.

Please could you list all imports of fox-based biological substances which have been imported into the UK?

The import of fox-based material into the United Kingdom would require a licence or authorisation issued by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) or Defra. These are valid for a set period of time, during which the importer can use the licence on multiple occasions. Therefore, APHA would not know how many imports of fox-based substances took place during the validity of the licence.

APHA do have a record of licences/ authorisations issued. However, in line with our data retention instructions, we only hold this information for 3 years. We can therefore supply data between 2014 and 2017.

Our records indicate that one import authorisation was issued for fox-based material on 1 May 2015. This was for "wild fox faeces swab samples stored in ethanol".

How many general licences have been applied for, for the import of fox-based substances?

Following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information in the requests above is not held by APHA.

There are various general licences/ authorisations available that could be used to import material from foxes. General licences/authorisations are published on GOV.UK and

importers do not have to apply to APHA to use these. Instead they must print a copy from the website and make sure they comply fully with the conditions laid down within the document.

If there is no general licence or authorisation for the commodity or its intended use then the importer must apply for a specific licence or authorisation.

Please could you confirm that any biological substances imported into the UK cannot be spread onto the land.

Following a search of our paper and electronic records, I have established that the information in requested here is not held by APHA.

The Environment Agency may be able to assist with information in this area. They can be contacted here: enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Please could you confirm that any biological substances relating to the genus Vulpes is to be treated or used in laboratory conditions only, and any biological material surplus to requirements must be destroyed under laboratory conditions.

Could you please clarify that any imported biological substance from the genus Vulpes is regarded as a potential hazard?"

Please note these two parts of your request do not fall within the definition of recorded information as defined within section 80 of the FOIA. Therefore, we have answered them as general correspondence.

Whilst most of the General Licences available are only for research purposes, at least one General Licence (IMP/GEN/14/06) does not limit the use of the products after import. In IMP/GEN/14/06, the first bullet point would apply to material from foxes which have been made safe. The General Licence does not specifically restrict the use of the material after import, although point 3 does have some restrictions on transportation and packaging, etc.

Applications for specific authorisations would be assessed on a case by case basis, and the conditions attached to a licence (if issued) would depend on the risk posed by the material to be imported.

Unless they are kept for reference purposes, or re-dispatched to the third country of origin, research and diagnostic samples - and any products derived from their use - shall be disposed of:

i. As waste by incineration or co-incineration;

ii. By pressure sterilisation and subsequent disposal or use in accordance with Articles 12, 13 and 14 of Regulation (EC) No 1069/2009.

iii. In accordance with point 4(b) of Section 1 of Chapter I of Annex VI of Regulation (EU) No 142/2011 in cases of:

a) Quantities not exceeding 2000 ml; and

b) Provided the samples or derived products have been produced and dispatched from third countries or parts of third countries, from which Member States authorise imports of fresh meat of domestic bovine animals, which are listed in Part I of Annex II to Regulation (EU) No 206/2010.

With regards to imported biological substance from the genus Vulpes regarded as a potential hazard, the risk will depend on the substance and the origin of the animals from which they were collected. Any application for uses other than research and diagnostic use would undergo a thorough risk assessment before a decision is reached to either permit or deny an import.

Information disclosed in response to this FOI request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on GOV.UK, together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

I attach an Annex which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you and contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the Access to Information Team at the email address below or postal address at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

ACCESS TO INFORMATION TEAM
Email: enquiries@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Annex

Copyright
The information supplied to you is Crown copyright, unless otherwise stated, and is protected by the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for the purposes of news reporting. You can find details on the arrangements for re-using Crown copyright information at:

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Complaints
If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information you may request an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this letter.

If you wish to request an internal review, please contact: The Access to Information Team at enquiries@apha.gsi.gov.uk or at the postal address at the top of this letter, who will arrange for an internal review of your case.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted APHA's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF