Animal & Plant Health Agency

Animal and Plant Health Agency
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Our Ref: ATIC2913

[redacted]
{By Email}

24 November 2022

Dear [redacted]

PROVISION OF REQUESTED INFORMATION

Thank you for your request for information about RT -PCR tests which the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) received on 27 October 2022. Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000.

The information you requested and the response is detailed below:

i. "Please disclose the country of origin and manufacturer of RT -PCR tests used in the UK by the APHA to determine avian flu".

All but two have their origin in the UK (APHA Weybridge). The tests were designed, validated and published by APHA Weybridge.

The two which do not have their origins at APHA Weybridge are the generic influenza A virus screening RT-PCR which was developed by, and therefore originated from the team of Alexander Nagy (Czech Republic) as described in Nagy et al., 2021 and the RT-PCR for specific detection of subtype N1 avian influenza virus (Payunporn et al., 2006; Thailand). Both the Nagy et al. and Payunporn et al. tests have been adapted and validated for use by APHA using reagents manufactured in the UK.

ii. "What is the cost of these tests for financial years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 so far?"

Financial Year	Amount
2018/2019	£0
2019/2020	£29,861
2020/2021	£83,546
2021/2022	£133,796
2022/2023	£107,958 (upto October 2022)

iii. “What is the claimed accuracy of these tests”?

The accuracy is 100% following heavy validation, which has shown these tests to be highly robust and resilient with reliable reproducibility and repeatability.

iv. “It is my understanding that if a "positive" test is found from either a cloacal or Oro-pharyngeal swab that no further examination is allowed for "health and safety " reasons- even if the positive test may be incidental to cause of death- e.g a bird was known to have been shot. Which body made this ruling or enforces it and please provide any manual or procedural document that examiners at the APHA have been given which states that this is the case”.

Avian influenza (AI) virus is a Specified Animal Pathogen Order (SAPO) Containment Level 4, and Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (ACDP) containment level 3 pathogen. APHA follow Health and Safety Executive (HSE) legislation for this pathogen. Please find details here: Biological agents: The principles, design and operation of Containment Level 4 facilities

APHA also work to the primary legislation that applies to contained use of specified animal pathogens, here: The Specified Animal Pathogens Order 2008

High Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) virus is also classified as an Anti-terrorism, Crime and Security Act (ATCSA) Schedule 5 agent, details here: https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/advisory-committee-on-dangerous-pathogens and HSE recommend it is handled at ACDP CL3.

Great Britian is currently in an Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak with risk level in wild birds currently rated as very high. All wild birds are first tested for HPAI through cloacal and oro-pharyngeal swabs before any further work can be undertaken. If these tests confirm the presence of HPAI, APHA are then limited in what further work can be undertaken due to the containment requirements required to comply with the legislation. APHA must operate in compliance with this legislation. Further information can be found here: Management and operation of microbiological containment laboratories

Information disclosed in response to this FOI request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOI 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.

An Annex is attached 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.gov.uk

Annex

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If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request, you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 11 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to the Access to Information Manager at the address at the top of this letter or email enquiries@apha.gov.uk and the team will arrange for an internal review of your case.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) for a decision. Please note that generally the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted APHA's own complaints procedure. The ICO can be contacted at:

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

If you need to contact the ICO, it's best to do so online. Please click here for contact details. You can also call them on 0303 123 1113.