



Our ref: FOI2023/13408
08 August 2023

Dear [REDACTED]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Brucella Canis Testing

Thank you for your request for information of 8th July about Brucella Canis Testing. APHA have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your information request and our response are set out below.

“In the last two months I am aware of THREE dogs that have been falsely identified as sero-positive for Brucella canis due to laboratory errors within your laboratory, and I am aware that you are currently contacting veterinary practices due to a wider error due to faulty reagent I think. This is somewhat concerning when the Chief Veterinary Office keeps reiterating that the only way to eliminate risk is to euthanase positive dogs and so some veterinary practices are only offering euthanasia. Therefore, it is essential that both owners and the veterinary profession understand how commonly errors occur within your laboratory (and are identified).

Please can you tell me:

Breaking down each of the points below by year (i.e. 2020, 2021, 2022, 01.01.2023 up until 14.07.2023)

1. How many incidents of laboratory error (e.g. faulty reagent, manual data error, etc) have been identified by the APHA laboratories since 2020?”

For Brucella canis testing the following number of Non-Conforming Work (NCW) reports were registered:

2020 – 2
2021 – 1
2022 – 2
2023 – 3

2. “What was the cause of each of the incidents (e.g. manual data entry error, faulty reagent, etc)”.

Please see table below detailing each of the 8 incidents:

Year	Incident number	Error description
2020	One	Customer error
2020	Two	Power failures
2021	One	Submission exceeded published turnaround time
2022	One	Submission exceeded published turnaround time
2022	Two	Results entry error
2023	One	Submission exceeded published turnaround time
2023	Two	Results entry error
2023	Three	Faulty reagent

3. "Of these, how many (case + sum of individual dog(s)) involved the:

The number of individual dogs are not included in every case.

Year	Incident number	Tests involved
2020	One	RSA
2020	Two	RSA, SAT
2021	One	RSA, SAT
2022	One	RSA, SAT
2022	Two	ELISA
2023	One	ELISA
2023	Two	RSA, SAT & ELISA
2023	Three	ELISA

4. "For each incident, how many individual dogs were affected? And what is your known error rate (known individual dog errors divided by total number of tests undertaken)?"

Between 01 January 2020 and 14 July 2023, 28,833 *Brucella canis* test results were reported.

Year	Incident number	Number of dogs	Error %
2020	One	N/A	
2020	Two	N/A	
2021	One	N/A	
2022	One	N/A	
2022	Two	One	0.003%
2023	One	One	0.003%
2023	Two	N/A	
2023	Three	Seven	0.024%

5. "In each case, how many of the dogs were falsely identified as positive on a test when they were actually negative?"

Year	Incident number	Number of dogs	Comments
2020	One	Zero	
2020	Two	Zero	
2021	One	Zero	
2022	One	Zero	
2022	Two	Zero	
2023	One	Zero	One dog was reported as positive when it was negative due to an interpretation error.
2023	Two	Zero	
2023	Three	Seven	

6. In each case, how many of the dogs were falsely identified as negative on a test when they were actually positive?

Year	Incident number	Number of dogs	Comments
2020	One	Zero	
2020	Two	Zero	
2021	One	Zero	
2022	One	Zero	
2022	Two	Zero	One dog was reported as negative when it was positive due to an interpretation error.
2023	One	Zero	
2023	Two	Zero	
2023	Three	Zero	

7. "In the most recent reagent error that affected multiple dogs (June 2023), what quality assurance process was not undertaken to allow this to happen?"

All quality assurance processes were undertaken.

"And what measures have been put in place to prevent this happening again?"

Immediate corrective action was to use a replacement fit for purposed reagent in place of the faulty reagent. APHA are in discussions with the reagent supplier and the NCW is currently ongoing.

8. "How many dogs are you aware of that have died as a consequence of these errors?"

Two dogs were euthanised following the result reporting to their veterinary surgeon.

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](https://www.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

enquiries@apha.gov.uk

Annex

Copyright

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright law.

Documents (except photographs or logos) can also be used in the UK without requiring permission for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder.

Most documents produced by APHA will be protected by Crown Copyright. Most Crown copyright information can be re-used under the [Open Government Licence](#). For information about the OGL and about re-using Crown Copyright information please see [The National Archives website](#).

Copyright in other documents may rest with a third party. For information about obtaining permission from a third party see the [Intellectual Property Office's website](#).

Complaints

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 within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to the Access to Information Team 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 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

Please click [here](#) for further contact details.