

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Notes for Guidance: Export Health Certificate for racing pigeons immediately released after entry in the EU - 8465

June 2025

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No: 8465 NFG

EHC for entry into the EU or NI of Racing Pigeons immediately released after entry.

NOTES FOR GUIDANCE (NFG) FOR THE CERTIFYING OFFICIERS (CO)

1. APPLICABLE LEGISLATION

[Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/692](#)

[Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2020/689](#)

[Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) 2019/2035](#)

[Regulation \(EU\) No 2016/429](#)

[Regulation \(EU\) No 2017/625](#)

[Regulation \(EU\) 2021/403](#)

[Regulation \(EU\) 2021/497](#)

[Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2024/351 - Model EHC amending Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2021/403](#)

Any EU legislation referenced in the certificate must be complied with and EU legislation can be accessed on the following link. You should ensure you use the latest version: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>

Please note that Official Control Regulations 2017/625 have repealed Regulation (EC) No 854/2004, 882/2004 and Directive No 96/23/EC. Please see link:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017R0625&from=EN>

Consolidated legislation

Consolidated texts, which integrate the basic instruments of EU legislation with their amendments and corrections in a single, non-official document, are available. Each consolidated text contains a list of all legal documents taken into account for its construction.

You can search for consolidated texts by using the 'find results by document number' option on the European Commission website. Once you have selected the relevant legislation, click 'document information', and then scroll down to 'all consolidated versions' and select the most recent version.

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/homepage.html>

Please note that the consolidated text may not contain the latest amendment to the legislation, as it takes several weeks for this to be updated.

Texts provided in this section are intended for information only. Please note that these texts have no legal value. For legal purposes please refer to the texts published in the 'Official Journal of the EU'.

IMPORTANT

These notes provide guidance to COs and exporters. The NFG should have been issued to you together with the relevant export certificate applicable for racing pigeons intended for dispatch to the EU or NI for immediate release for return to GB. The NFG should not be read as a standalone document but in conjunction with the health certificate.

We strongly suggest that exporters obtain full details of the importing country's requirements from the veterinary authorities in the country concerned, or their representatives in the UK, in advance of each consignment.

Please note, policies are being reviewed. NFG will be further amended to provide specific guidance. Exporters should look at NFG regularly for any updates.

2. SCOPE OF THE CERTIFICATE

EHC for entry into the EU or NI of racing pigeons immediately release after entry in the EU/NI.

This certificate is to be completed according to the notes for the completion of certificates provided for in Chapter 4 of Annex I to Implementing Regulation (EU) 2020/2235.

3. CERTIFICATION BY AN OV

In **England, Scotland and Wales**, this certificate must be signed by a Government Veterinary Officer (e.g. APHA, FSA or FSS employed veterinary officers) or by an OV appointed by APHA on behalf of Ministers in Defra, the Scottish Government or the Welsh Government and who hold the appropriate Official Controls Qualification (Veterinary) (OCQ (V)) authorisation.

OVs must sign and stamp, with the OV stamp, the health certificate in ink of a different colour to that of the printing of the EHC. There is no requirement to sign and stamp in a specific colour.

The OV should keep a copy of the signed certificate and any supporting documents for at least two years after signature or receipt/dispatch of the consignment, whichever is later. These can be electronic copies.

EHC in foreign language/s of the EU Member States (MSs).

EHC should be in English and the foreign language of the Border Control Post (BCP) of entry in the EU. The original copy of the required EHC must accompany the consignment to the BCP of entry.

Listing of the EU MS BCPs can be found here: https://ec.europa.eu/food/animals/vet-border-control/bip-contacts_en

The foreign language certificate as received from the APHA Centre for International Trade at Carlisle or via the Export Health Certificates Online system (EHCO) and bearing the same unique reference number as the English certificate, should be considered an official and accurate translations of the English, as published in EU legislation.

The (sub-) paragraphs / options and how they are numbered and formatted is identical in the English and foreign language editions and to the legislation published by the European Commission. Therefore, the same phrases/sentences in the foreign language versions as in the English version should be struck through and these deletions should be stamped and initialled in both versions. Both versions must also be signed (as opposed to being initialled) and stamped by the OV, the foreign language certificate is deemed to be a genuine and properly authorised translation of the English version.

This also applies to any instructions in the guidance notes to strike out certain paragraphs or to certify statements that the country is free of certain notifiable diseases etc.

Additional information can be found in the APHA Vet Gateway:

http://apha.defra.gov.uk/External_OV_Instructions/Export_Instructions/Certification_Procedures/index.htm

SIGNING AND STAMPING

When signing a certificate, the CO should ensure that the certificate contains no deletions or alterations, other than those which are indicated on the certificate to be permissible and any corrections to permitted entries, subject to such changes being initialled and stamped (in the margin) by the CO. Permissible deletions are normally indicated in the 'Notes' section at the end of the certificate, with the instruction 'Keep as appropriate' or 'delete if not applicable'.

- Where the certificate contains optional or contextual statements, the statements which are not relevant shall be crossed out, individually initialled, and stamped by the CO, or completely removed from the certificate.
- Permitted paragraphs and sections may be crossed out by applying a 'Z' across the section or paragraph rather than crossing out line by line.
- There is no requirement for a date and time to accompany each stamp. The date is only entered at the required entry field in Part I of the certificate, and at the end where the CO signs, stamps and dates that action.
- We are aware of some BCPs demanding that all handwritten information in Part 1 of the EHC is initialled and stamped, including handwritten scoring out of otherwise blank boxes. There is no legal requirement in EU legislation that all the hand-written information entered in the certificate must be signed and stamped. It is only in the case of correction, in any part of the certificate, or in the case of statements to be crossed out, that the certifier must add signature (or initials) and stamp. This has been confirmed by the European Commission. The Commission noted however, in the case of a hand-written certificate, it is expected that the same one person completes the document. If not, the BCP might suspect that empty boxes were completed by another person after the certificate has been signed by the official.

You should consider checking with the specific BCP regarding their preference when it comes to the stamping and initialling of handwritten scoring out of otherwise blank boxes in Part I of the EHC.

- **Clarification from the European Commission means that all pages (as opposed to sheets of paper) are signed and stamped once individually in place of fan stamping and in addition to any permitted alterations. There is no requirement to fan stamp.**
- COs are reminded to consult the NFG prior to the certification of each EHC. NFG will be updated with this new information in due course.

Further Information COs should make sure they are familiar with all relevant guidance and other documents relating to EHCs and that they discuss requirements with exporters in advance.

See <http://apha.defra.gov.uk/official-vets/Guidance/exports/ehc-online.htm>

You can also contact APHA's Centre for International Trade (CIT) on 03000 200 301.

PART I: DETAILS OF THE CONSIGNMENT

All boxes in Part I of the certificate must be completed. When a box is not applicable/optional, and not filled, please score it through.

Please use schedule to be attached to the certificate if there is not enough space to fill the information. See Section 'Addition of Schedules' below.

Please complete all the boxes in Part I of the certificate in accordance with the guidance laid down in Chapter 4 of Annex I to [Commission Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2020/2235, Amended by Implementing Regulation \(EU\) 2023/2744](#). The Harmonised System (HS) Code is a commodity classification system used as a basis for customs tariffs and for international trade statistics.

It is the exporter's responsibility to ensure that the HS code is entered correctly and accurately reflects the product(s) being consigned.

Further information on HS Codes can be found online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/trade-tariff/sections> and

<http://madb.europa.eu/madb/euTariffs.htm>

I.11 Place of dispatch.

Box I.11 - as per Regulation 2020/2235, enter the 'establishment(s), from where the animals or products come from.' For animals this is the establishment where the animals are regularly kept..'

Where the EHC is certified at a basketing event rather than the registered establishment where the animals are regularly kept, and the birds in the consignment come from a range of establishments, enter 'See attached Schedule' in box I.11 and list all the registered establishments in a schedule.

I.13 Place of Loading.

Where the EHC is certified at a basketing event, enter place of basketing in box I.13.

I.27 Identification of the commodities.

“*Species*” – list the name of the species with Latin name in brackets e.g. “Domestic pigeons” (*Columba livia*)

“*CN code*”: use the appropriate Harmonised System (HS) code of the World Customs Organisation: 01.06.31, 01.06.32 or 01.06.39.

“*Identification system*”/“*Identification number*”: The animal must be individually identified by means of a unique marked closed leg-ring or an injectable transponder in accordance with Article 53 of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2020/692.

“*Quantity*” enter the number of birds in the consignment

PART II: Health Information

II.1 Animal Health Attestation

II.1.1. This can be certified by an OV based on documentary evidence of the destination country’s competent authority agreeing to this move. There are currently no countries listed to export this commodity to the EU and each country must authorise the move as stated in article Article 230(2) of [Regulation \(EU\) 2016/429](#).

II.1.2. Can be certified based on evidence that the establishment of origin in box I.11 is registered with RPA, RPW and ScotEID. OVs must assure themselves that the keeper holds a copy of the Establishment Operator Declaration signed within the last 12 months. For establishments in Scotland, the Establishment Operator Declaration is electronic and issued via ScotEID.

For all establishments in GB the OV must check the establishments County Parish Holding number (CPH) against the list of suspended establishments on [Gov.uk](#). This list covers establishments across GB.

- a) This paragraph can be certified by an OV on the basis of the information contained within interactive disease map. The map can be found using the following link [Avian Influenza Export Health Certification Check \(arcgis.com\)](#). When selecting layer of ‘10 km racing pigeon/captive bird movement restricted area’ the map indicates 10km zones around outbreaks of HPAI that remain active for 30 days.

For Newcastle disease, this can be certified by checking the list of [Notifiable Diseases- ET171](#)

- b) This paragraph can be certified on the basis that:
 - i. the establishment is registered and the keeper holds a valid copy of the operator declaration stating they are compliant with vaccination requirements.
 - ii. The Racing Pigeons (Vaccination) Order 1994 states “an organiser of a pigeon show or race which takes place wholly or partly in Great Britain shall ensure that all racing pigeons entered for the race or show have been vaccinated with a suitable vaccine against paramyxovirus 1 in pigeons

II.1.3. This can be certified on the basis that vaccination against Avian Influenza (AI) is prohibited. There is no plan to apply vaccination against AI in the UK even in an outbreak situation.

II.1.4. This can be certified based on the domestic legislation referred to in II.1.2 above and the Establishment Operator Declaration.

II.1.5. This can be certified on the basis that the animals are not to be killed due to the diseases mentioned in point II.1.2. above or an emerging disease.

II.1.6. This can be certified on visual inspection at the time of certification. Point c) can be certified based on an owner's declaration that the cleaning and disinfecting has taken place.

4. NOTIFIABLE DISEASE CLEARANCE

Some export certificates for animals and animal products will include statements that will require the OV to certify that specified zones or the entire country of origin are free from certain diseases.

COs must check the following sources of disease information for the United Kingdom immediately prior to certification, to ensure disease freedom statements can be certified:

- the Notifiable Disease Occurrence List for Great Britain (ET171) available on the [Exports > Certification Procedures](#) page of the APHA Vet Gateway
- the UK Status for Non-Notifiable Diseases Relevant to Export Certification (ET152) available on the [Exports > Certification Procedures](#) page of the APHA Vet Gateway.
- For any postcodes in Northern Ireland, COs can obtain clearance using the interactive map provided by DAERA that can be found here: [AI Trade Map](#)

For HPAI there is an interactive map which can be found in the link below under "**Certifying Officers Obtaining Clearance for Avian Influenza**".

<http://apha.defra.gov.uk/official-vets/Guidance/exports/ehc-online.htm>

For Great Britain:

In the absence of a specific Notifiable Disease Clearance (618NDC) from CITC: COs may certify that GB has disease free status or region free status for those diseases mentioned in the health certificate, once they have checked the disease list(s) for the last occurrence of the disease, and have ensured it complies with the time frames in the certificate.

In the event of a disease outbreak that affects a CO being able to obtain their own disease clearance, CITC will notify COs to make it clear which disease freedom statements should not be certified and where necessary, will issue a 618NDC notifiable disease clearance if the EHC can continue to be issued for certain regions that retain free status.

In the event of a disease outbreak after the EHC has been issued that affects the disease clearance, COs must not certify the EHC and must contact CITC immediately for advice on whether certification can still take place. If a disease outbreak affects the disease clearance procedures for this EHC, a 618NDC will be reinstated by CITC which will be issued with the EHC until a time when disease clearance can be reinstated.

NOTE: This does not apply to Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (TSEs) or Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) freedom statements.

5. COLLECTION OF EVIDENCE

Certification Support Officers may not be utilised for gathering evidence relating to this certificate.

6. CLINICAL EXAMINATION

OVs must subject the birds on the day, within 24 hours, prior to dispatch to a clinical inspection and found free of obvious signs of disease.

OVs must use their professional judgement to determine the level of inspection required in order to ensure that no animal is exported which shows signs of infectious disease and that animals are fit to travel to their intended destination.

7. ANIMAL TRANSPORT ATTESTATION

Animal Welfare

Council Regulation EC No 1/2005 (EC) is implemented under the Welfare of

Animals (Transport) (England) Order 2006 and parallel legislation in Scotland and Wales. If transported by air, animals should be transported in accordance with International Air Transport Association (IATA) standards.

Every animal should be fit for the journey that is planned and all animals should be transported in conditions guaranteed not to cause them injury or unnecessary suffering. The conditions related to fitness of animals for transport during the intended journey are set out in Article 3(b) and Annex I, Chapter I of Council Regulation 1/2005. Animals should be in good health, free of illness, free of significant wounds and able to walk without pain on all legs. Animals that are injured or that present physiological weaknesses or pathological processes shall not be considered fit for transport.

8. ADDITION OF SCHEDULES

When the space in Part I or Part II of the certificate is insufficient to accommodate full details of the consignment a schedule may be used. In the relevant section of the certificate the CO should annotate the certificate 'see attached schedule'. A new schedule should be created (typed or clearly written) containing the same information as that required in the certificate. The schedule must include the certificate reference number on each page and must be signed, dated and stamped by the CO in a colour other than the printed text on each page and under the last entry. The schedule forms part of the certificate. All pages of the certificate, including the schedule, must be sequentially numbered. Any blank spaces in the schedule or the certificate should be struck through with diagonal lines.

Further guidance is available here:

http://apha.defra.gov.uk/External_OV_Instructions/Export_Instructions/Certification_Procedures/index.htm

9. CERTIFIED COPIES OF EHCs

When completing export certification, the CO must make photocopies of, or scan and save all documents they certify. OVs must retain copies of certification documents in accordance with RCVS Certification principles.

<https://www.rcvs.org.uk/setting-standards/advice-and-guidance/code-of-professional-conduct-for-veterinary-surgeons/supporting-guidance/certification/>

COs must retain copies of all export documentation for a period of two years. A certified copy of this EHC does not need to be returned to the APHA CITC. For the purposes of completing routine Quality Assurance checks on export certification, CITC may request certified copies of certification from COs.

Further details on Post Certifying Procedures, 'certified copies' of certification and the types of documents that should be retained by COs can be found on the [APHA Vet Gateway](#).

10. LEGAL STATEMENT

The existing EU legislation that the UK complied with prior to the end of the Transition Period has been incorporated into our domestic law as "retained EU law" under the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018. References in our guidance and certification to such EU instruments should be taken to be references to this "retained EU law". The EU standards that this legislation includes continue to remain in force, without substantive amendment, as part of UK domestic law (apart from corrections to make the EU legislation fully operable).

11. DISCLAIMER

This certificate and NFG are provided on the basis of information available at the time and may not necessarily comply fully with the requirements of the importing country. It is the exporter's responsibility to check the certificate against any relevant import permit or any advice provided by the competent authority in the importing country. If these do not match, the exporter should contact APHA in Carlisle.

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/search/all>

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at liveanimalexports.carlisle@apha.gov.uk

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Version History

NFG

Version 4: Published 16 June 2025

NOTIFIABLE DISEASE CLEARANCE – Section amended to include reference to AI map for NI.

Version 3: Published 31 July 2024

Applicable Legislation: Implementing Regulation (EU) 2024/351 added

Part I.27: Added “identification number”