International trade: Compartmentalisation for poultry breeding companies

Scheme Guidance

What is compartmentalisation?

Compartmentalisation is a scheme open to poultry breeding companies in Great Britain (GB). Approval as a compartment is based on the management protocols, biosecurity systems and husbandry practises at a given premises. Depending on acceptance of compartments by importing countries, compartment status may place a company in a stronger position with regard to resumption of exports following an outbreak of Avian Influenza in GB.

A list of approved compartments in GB is available here. [*link to AH maintained spreadsheet list*]

Who manages the scheme?

The scheme is managed by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Applicant premises will be inspected by staff of the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA). The administration procedures are carried out by the VLA, Animal Health (AH - the veterinary field service delivery agency for GB) and where relevant the Devolved Administrations.

Separate arrangements will be put in place in Northern Ireland. [*http://www.dardni.gov.uk/*].

Who can become a compartment?

The scheme is open to any poultry breeding company which has an administrative headquarters within GB. All the premises to be included in the compartment must be located in the GB, and must be under the full management control of the Company. Initial approval of compartments can only be granted when there are no restrictions in place in the country for avian influenza in line with EU legislation.

Scheme options

Companies may apply for approval according to two separate standards. The EU Standard implements conditions in the EU Commission Regulation 616/2009, which comes into force from 1 October 2009. This option is therefore available from 1 October 2009. The GB Enhanced Standard is available now. It incorporates all the requirements of the EU Standard, with additional specific instructions. All compartments approved to the GB Enhanced Standard are therefore automatically approved to the EU Standard while only incurring the fee for approval to the GB Enhanced Standard.

The GB Enhanced Standard covers Newcastle Disease as well as Avian Influenza. The EU Standard covers only Avian Influenza.

A Company may opt to have a number of individual premises approved as separate compartments, or to have a number of separate but functionally linked premises approved collectively as a single compartment. This choice is at the discretion of the Company.

The rules for both the EU Standard and GB Enhanced Standard are available here. [*link to pdfs Summary of Rules and Protocol requirement papers].* GB Enhanced Standard conditions are indicated in bold type in the Protocol requirements.

How to become a compartment

Companies wishing to apply for approval must submit an application form [*link to application form*] to the Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) at:

Compartment Applications, Veterinary Laboratories Agency, Merrythought, Calthwaite, Penrith, Cumbria CA11 9RR.

Application forms are available at the above link and should be printed and sent as hard copy.

The application must be accompanied by the following documents for each site:

Information about the whole compartment:

- Application form signed by a responsible company member.
- Organogram showing all the proposed compartment premises, indicating their functions and product flows between them, and the major inputs and outputs from outside the compartment envelope.
- The company's overall biosecurity plan

Plus information for each individual compartment premises:

- Address and contact details for the premises.
- Site plan for the premises showing product and personnel flow lines.
- HACCP analysis for the premises.
- Records of avian influenza testing at the premises and other surveillance requirements for the 6 months prior to application as set out in Question 8 of the application form.

VLA will be responsible for assessing the Company's management protocols, and for carrying out site inspections of each individual compartment premises.

Fees

VLA will invoice the Company for the inspection fees after the completion of the inspection. The full fee is payable regardless of whether the result is a recommendation for approval, approval subject to remedial action, or not recommended for approval. If further inspection is necessary, a further fee will normally be payable.

The fees will be the same for the EU Standard or the GB Enhanced Standard. For the year 2009 - 2010 the fees are:

Headquarters visit charge.	£1400 + VAT
Additional Headquarters visit charge per extra day needed*.	£1000 + VAT
Site visit charge per site. Initial application or re-inspection (for use when poultry company will allow only one visit per day).	£1000 + VAT

Site visit charge per site. Initial applications or re-inspection (for use when poultry company will allow two site visits per day).	£500 + VAT

* The Headquarters additional visit charge will normally only apply where the number of farm premises requiring data review cannot be managed in one day .

Approval

When the inspection process has been completed VLA will report its findings in writing to Animal Health, copied to the Company. The letter will state whether or not the Company meets the requirements for approval as a compartment.

If the Company fails to meet the requirements, the reasons will be given in the letter. The final authority to approve or reject applications lies with the Competent Authority and there is no appeals procedure.

In some instances, VLA may advise the Company in writing that certain minor improvements are required before the Company can meet the requirement for approval. These improvements must be completed to VLA's satisfaction within 30 days. VLA will then advise Animal Health that the Company meets all the requirements for approval as a compartment without the need for the company to make a new application

When approval has been confirmed the Company will receive a certificate to confirm its status as an approved compartment. The compartment approval date is the date the compartment approval certificate is issued once all the sites comprising the compartment have been successfully inspected. The certificate will list the premises which have been approved in an attached schedule. The premises will be identified only by their premises approval number and their county location. These details will be posted on a publicly available Defra web-site.

The Company may request that further premises are inspected for approval at any time (either as individual compartments, or to be added to the collective compartment). In the case of a collective compartment, the new premises will be added to the list of existing compartment premises. A new schedule will be issued showing the full revised list of premises. However the start date of that compartment will remain the date of issue of the original certificate.

The company may request the cancellation of its approved compartment status at any time. Individual premises may be removed from the compartment, provided that there are no bio-security or epidemiological issues in the compartment at the time of removal which may affect the approval status of the remainder of the compartment. There will be no reimbursement of fees for any cancellation or removal of sites.

Duration of Approval and Re-Inspection

Approval is not time limited and will remain valid as long as the Company continues to observe all the rules of the scheme, and the results of the necessary re-inspections are satisfactory.

Following initial approval the re-inspection process will follow a two year cycle with 50% of compartment sites inspected each year. The re-inspection cycle will commence twelve months after the issue date of the original certificate and continue thereafter annually on the anniversary of that date. This process may be subject to review and may be altered at any point.

The start date of the re-inspection cycle will not be affected by the addition date of any new premises.

It is the Company's responsibility to contact VLA each year shortly before the anniversary of the approval date to request re-inspection of their premises, using the application form [*link*]. The company should list the sites that it wishes to have re-inspected. Sites should be re-inspected in the order that they were originally approved.

Any company found not to have carried out re-inspection of all sites in any two year cycle will automatically have their approval suspended until full re-inspection has been completed.

In addition, Defra retains the right to require more or different re-inspections at the company's expense if epidemiological or other circumstances make it advisable (e.g. major changes to building structures or procedures).

Additionally if any Third Country requires more frequent inspections, the company will decide whether it wants to go to the extra expense of additional inspections in order to continue trade with that country.

Maintaining approval

The Company's compartment manager is responsible for ensuring the continued observance of all the compartment conditions, and in particular must:

- supervise and monitor that all compartment requirements are maintained,
- ensure that the required disease surveillance is maintained in line with Sections 5 and 6 of the flock farm protocols (including additional requirements in the event of a disease outbreak),
- organise regular internal and external audits,
- inform Animal Health immediately if any conditions are no longer met (either by post to Poultry Section, Animal Health, Hadrian House, Wavell Drive, Carlisle CA1 2TB, or by email to LiveAnimalExports.Carlisle@animalhealth.gsi.gov.uk).

Suspension or Withdrawal of Approval

If following the re-inspection process, or following notification by the compartment manager or through any other means, the Competent Authority becomes aware of any changes in the structure or procedures at an approved premises which are not consistent with approved status, it may:

- suspend approved status of the compartment after 30 days unless the problem has been remedied before then;
- or suspend approved status of the compartment immediately, and not restore it until the problem has been remedied;
- or withdraw approved status of the compartment immediately (this may follow a suspension, during which the necessary correction has not been made).

Approval will be withdrawn if any site in the compartment fails a Poultry Health Scheme inspection or there is an outbreak of avian influenza in the compartment.

If approval is withdrawn following the failure of a limited amount of sites, then the company may make a case to the Competent Authority setting out the justification for the epidemiological separation of the failed sites. The Competent Authority may agree, possibly following further inspection visits, to consider the removal of the site from the compartment allowing the remaining sites to continue as a compartment.

If approved status is withdrawn, the public web-site will be amended without delay. After approval has been withdrawn, any request from the company for re-approval at that premises will be treated as a new application, for which a further fee will be payable.

Disease outbreak

In the event of a disease outbreak, disease control regulations under EU and UK legislation will take precedence over compartment rules. In the case of exports which are not prohibited under EU or UK legislation, dispatches to those Third Countries which are willing to accept consignments from approved compartments will be accompanied by a supplementary certificate attesting to the compartment status of the premises of origin.

However trade decisions are entirely at the discretion of the authorities in each country of destination and no guarantee can be given on what any particular country will accept at such a time.