

SERVICE STATEMENT

Our standards

The VLA is committed to setting and maintaining the highest standard of service.

We continually aim to improve our services and that means we need, and value, your feedback on the services we provide.

Our staff perform procedures in line with the best scientific and administrative principles. We are certified to ISO 9001 for all aspects of our work. In addition, various parts of the VLA are certified to the following external quality standards:

- Good Laboratory Practice (GLP).
- Good Clinical Practice (veterinary) (GCPv).
- Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP).
- ISO 17025 – Requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories.
- ISO Guide 43 – Requirements for proficiency testing providers.
- Joint codes of Practice for Research and Veterinary activities (including surveillance) issued by Defra, FSA, BBSRC and NERC.
- Official Food and Feed Control Regulations in relation to its Community Reference Laboratory (CRL) and National Reference Laboratory functions.

The VLA has 'Investor in People' status; we are committed to investing in the training and development of our employees to maintain and improve the quality of the services offered.

We are also certified to ISO 14001 and we make sure our daily operations are as environmentally friendly as possible.

Feedback

We carry out work for customers on a contract basis. For our Government customers the main point of contact is the programme manager. Non-Government customers have a named project manager as the main contact. Addressing particular needs of each of our customers, whether in Government or the private sector, is fundamental to our work.

We send out an annual Customer Satisfaction questionnaire to our surveillance and research customers in Government, and a questionnaire to commercial customers when contracts have been completed. The results of these are then used to review and improve our services.

We welcome both positive and negative feedback, to help us maintain a high quality service. If you are unhappy with any aspect of the service that we offer, and would like to complain, the VLA has a formal complaints procedure.

You, the customer, can expect us to:

- Be open and provide full information as far as is practical.
- Investigate the cause of any problems.
- Operate effective systems and continually seek improvements to prevent things going wrong.
- Put things right when they do go wrong and make sure that it does not happen again.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If you have a complaint about our services we want to hear about it so we can look at our procedures and see where they can be improved. We want to learn from our mistakes and ensure you are happy with our service.

If you have a complaint, what should you do?

In the first instance you should speak, or write, to the person you have been dealing with. If you are telephoning, please make it clear that you wish to make a complaint, and provide full details of your complaint including any relevant dates. Unless the complaint concerns other work areas, policy matters or financial issues, that person (or their Head of Department) will reply to you directly in writing, otherwise they will refer your complaint to the most appropriate person.

If you are not content with the reply you receive, or if you would prefer not to deal directly with your contact, you can write to, or telephone, the VLA Quality Manager on 01932 359558 who will ensure that your complaint is dealt with appropriately. Please supply as much information as possible.

If you remain dissatisfied after receiving a reply from the Quality Manager you may pursue the matter by writing to the Chief Executive.

If you are still not satisfied you can ask your Member of Parliament (MP) to raise the matter either with the Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) or with the Parliamentary Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is entirely independent of Government, and functions to investigate complaints by members of the public about the way they have been treated by Government Departments and their Executive Agencies. You should bear in mind that they can act only when requested to do so by an MP.

The Ombudsman can be contacted at:

Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP
Telephone: 0845 015 4033
www.ombudsman.org.uk

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