



Meet the team

Sorin Pescariu - Lead Official Veterinary Surgeon MRCVS

Who are you and what is your role?

My name is Sorin and I am the Lead Official Veterinary Surgeon working for Ashford Port Health at Sevington Border Control Post. I lead a team of 22 Official Veterinary Surgeons.

How long have you worked at Sevington BCP

I joined initially in April 2021 initiating and implementing the Import Controls and SPS checks for consignments of Products of Animal Origin (POAO) coming from EU.

For a period of nine months, I was sub-contracted to the Animal and Plant Agency (APHA), with duties related to the National Emergency Avian Influenza Virus Outbreak. That included veterinary tasks including Disease Control Surveillance, conducting Veterinary Risk Assessments, post Vet Audits and supporting APHA's Ukrainian Animal Importation Scheme.

To implement the new Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) and the checks to come, I came back to Ashford Port Authority in June 2023 directly involved on the implementation of the new program, recruitment process, developing processes and policies. This was all done to secure readiness for the end of April 2024 when we went live.

Is this something any vet can do or are there extra qualifications needed?

Firstly, to perform as a Portal Official Veterinary Surgeon (POVS) you require a recognised degree in Veterinary Medicine. To be eligible to practice in UK, you also require a full registration as a member in RCVS.

Secondly, to specifically work in a Border Control Post (BCP) as an OVS the essentials are to be a Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (Membership number must be provided and checked against the register) and possess the APHA Authorisation Product Exports (OCQ (V) – PX. It is also desirable to have previous experience in meat hygiene, Red Meat and White Meat OVS qualifications plus any relevant food, health, and safety post graduate training.

Is any further specialist training needed for this role?

To be appointed by the appropriate Port Health Authority you need authorisation to perform or make decisions at the BCP under Regulation 12 of the TARP Regulations 2011. For this you require Portal Training which consists of specific in-house training in Port Health Fundamentals that covers all areas of the job description. There are also online FSA/ DEFRA training courses that require completion to keep up with current legislation.

Describe what you do and a typical day?

The Official Veterinary Surgeon completes a range of statutory duties to safeguard Public and Animal Health and protect the UK border. There is no such thing as a typical day but my main duties include:

Carrying out documentation, identity, and physical checks on POAO (Product of Animal Origin) including Animal By-Products on various commodities to ensure only safe products enter the food chain.

Sampling when suspicions arise; dealing with consignments that are non-compliant and constitute a potential risk.

Enforcement actions when dealing with non-conformant consignments

Liaising with the relevant traders/stakeholders regarding decision making and investigations.

Issuing legal notices and giving advice on options to traders/importers on re-export, destruction, remedial action or downgrade of a particular consignment for another purpose when situation permitted.

Responding to queries as per current legislation.

Training of new Port Health staff in specific duties related to their role,

supervisory and managerial attributions including Internal and Self Audits

Engaging with other authorities as Inland Authorities, DEFRA, Border Force, HMRC etc

How are tasks assigned day to day?

Tasks are distributed to the vets on duty based on a live platform called OVS Tasks in which all the vets have access. When a vet is on duty they will see live the tasks that assigned to them. This provides efficiency and ensures all areas of responsibilities are covered for their shift.

How does your work help to keep the public safe?

Our role and responsibilities as vets at Ashford Port Health are to ensure biosecurity controls are in place at the border to protect the UK. We ensure that legislative requirements are followed to ensure public health and animal health.

How does your vet training/expertise help you in this role?

The Portal Training and courses completed together with the vast experience I've accumulated over time have a crucial role in confidence and ensuring accuracy on decision making and implementation.

What do you love about what you do?

Over the past 20 years working in the Food/ Meat Industry, I developed a passion for Public and Animal health covering areas as Veterinary work, Meat Hygiene and Inspection, Food Quality and Food Safety.

This passion has been lifted to the next level when I joined the Import Control branch, considering the complexity of the job and the level of responsibilities to ensure biosecurity, Public and Animal Health are of the required standards.

One of the greatest satisfactions has been recruitment and building a team of veterinary surgeons to staff the Border Control Post considering the shortage of vets in the UK for this kind of role.

This project was successful and has had a positive impact in terms of: carrying out official controls for products of animal origin, maintaining compliance, safeguarding the health and safety of animal-origin imports and upholding regulatory standards in the food and farming industry

I have also enjoyed developing and implementing the Internal BCP processes and procedures; building up and maintaining positive relationships with other Portal OVS's at other Border Control Posts (both in GB and EU) and arranging visits to observe good practice at other sites.

What is your one tip to food/feed importers?

It is the importer's responsibility to ensure Part 1 of the Common Health Entry Document (CHEDP) is completed. This will enable prompt notification of the incoming import consignment to the relevant BCP.

One tip for traders / Importers is to ensure the pre-notification of their intention to import a consignment into the country are within the minimum 24hr timeframe. This will allow the Port Health authority to process the declaration and carry out the documentary checks in a timely manner and prevent any further delays.