

QMS Frequently Asked Questions - Health Planning
QMS Cattle & Sheep Assurance Scheme

Q1. Why do farmers have to carry out health plans?

- A.** Health planning has long been considered a useful way of proactively managing livestock health and welfare, equipping farmers to avoid disease pitfalls and optimise productivity.
- Veterinary input helps to ensure such plans are robust, effective, and strategic, and supports farmers with current best practice in areas such as antibiotic stewardship.
 - In line with other UK assurance schemes, and to ensure equivalence with other assurance schemes, Quality Meat Scotland (QMS) introduced a requirement for veterinary review of health plans in 2020 but initially offered a two-year dispensation to allow time for affected farmers to incorporate this into their practice. This was extended for a further year until March 31st, 2023, which has now come to an end.

The vet does not have to visit specifically to carry out the health plan. If the vet visits anyway, it can be carried out then.

Q2. How much will it cost to get a vet to review my health plan?

- A.**
- Costs will vary depending on the veterinary practice, so it is hard to say a fixed amount.
 - The vet does not have to visit specifically to carry out the health plan – this could be carried out remotely.
 - While the 2022 standards require that members must have an annual veterinary visit, a visit which takes place for clinical reasons (e.g., BVD blood sampling, attend a sick animal) would count.
 - The health plan process is an opportunity to improve health and efficiency, and as such is likely to either save the farmer/crofter money or increase revenue.

Q3. The health plan dispensation has stopped, does this mean I will be non-compliant on 1st April if my health plan is not signed by a vet?

- A.** No, it means that from 1st April all member prior to their next assessment must have their vet sign off their health plans and annual livestock health and performance review. So, for example, if the members assessment is due on the 1st of November, the business has until the 1st of November to obtain vet sign off.

Q4. Why can the dispensation not continue?

- A.** The decision to end the dispensation was made mainly due to the incoming changes to European export health certificates, that from the 13th of December 2023 will require a veterinary attestation to qualify. With the quality assurance schemes gaining earned recognition, meaning that any quality assured

livestock automatically meet the new requirements of the export health certificates we needed to ensure that they meet the requirements as set out.

Q5. What happens if I cannot get my vet to complete and sign off my health plan within the 30days?

- A.** If on a visit the member does not have their health plan signed off by a vet and a non-compliance is raised, assessors have been asked to notify the member that if they require more time to submit corrective action, due to vet availability then all they need to do is contact the certification body Food Integrity Assurance (FIA) to request an extension to submit the appropriate corrective action.

Q6. Can I use a generic Animal Health and Welfare Plan?

- A.** Use of a template is recommended; however, the plan must be specific to your farm. The plan must refer to those responsible for the livestock and contain the contact details for the members vet practice. A template can be found at <https://www.qmscotland.co.uk/cattle-sheep-standards>

Q7. Can I complete the Health Plan myself?

- A.** Members can continue to complete their health plans themselves or with an SQP, collaborative discussion with all suitably qualified advisors is encouraged, as long as the final review and sign off is undertaken by their vet.