

**AFBIFOI20181201**

b) Details of any change on provision of influenza vaccination since 2016

**AFBI Response:**

AFBI follows the advice of higher authorities (Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation and the Public Health Agency) who are the UK expert advisers on this topic.

In September 2017, Occupational Health Service (OHS), who administer the vaccination programme, advised AFBI of the following PHA advice:

*“You will be aware that the PHA endorses the Public Health advice on vaccination/ immunisation from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI).*

*A few years ago, this committee reviewed the evidence on continuation of the annual influenza vaccination programme for poultry workers. The initial objective of the introduction of seasonal flu vaccination programme was to mitigate the theoretical risk of poultry workers being co-infected with seasonal influenza virus and avian influenza virus which could lead to re-assortment into a avian flu strain that could be transmitted between humans.*

*Given that the occurrence of avian influenza is infrequent and that there is no confirmed H5N1 human-to-human transmission in the EU, the committee advised that there is currently no benefit in continuing the routine influenza vaccination of poultry workers.*

*The PHA will support the above advice from JCVI in relation to the annual influenza vaccination programme for poultry worker in Northern Ireland.”*

At this time, OHS also advised AFBI of the fact that as of 2017/18, its Sponsor Department (Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs) had moved from pre-vaccination of its staff involved in the Avian Influenza programme following this advice from PHA.

After consideration of this advice by relevant Heads of Branch, AFBI HR notified OHS on 29 November 2017 to advise that *“On review of the new information from OHS based on the expert advice from the JCVI and backed by PHA, VSD Branches no longer wish to proceed with their vaccination requests that were submitted to HR”*.

As described above, following the PHA advice prior to OHS allocation of appointments for the 2017/18 programme, staff originally identified as category AI 2 (refer to 2008 policy) were re-considered as category AI 3 and screened for suitability to receive the vaccine and anti-viral medication, rather than provided with the vaccine.

From that time onwards, AFBI staff have been identified as category AI 3 status and this will continue unless the JCVI (Joint Council for Vaccination and Immunisation) advise differently in the future.

In line with this new arrangement, staff were advised of the following for the 2018/19 programme:

*“AFBI HR are required to submit referral forms to the Occupational Health Service (OHS) for those staff involved in the Avian Influenza programme. OHS have advised that staff will not receive the vaccine this year but those involved will still need to be screened by OHS to ensure they are fit to receive the vaccine should they need to do so.*

*Can you please ensure that any staff member within your Branch needing to be screened by OHS is instructed to complete the attached questionnaire, once complete they should place in a sealed envelope with their national insurance number clearly printed on the front of the envelope and marked as **AI3**. All questionnaires should be sent to AFBI Human Resources, Newforge Lane, Belfast by close of play Friday 17th August 2018.*

*\*\*Please note that only those staff actually involved in the Avian Influenza programme should be completing this questionnaire.*

*Given staff are only being screened by the OHS they may not be called to an appointment however, if they are required to attend an appointment it is essential they do so and that such appointments are not cancelled unless there are exceptional unforeseen circumstances for doing so. If an OHS appointment needs to be cancelled please ensure that AFBI HR are informed in order that we can reschedule for another date and time.”*