

**Office of the National Secretary  
Local Government & Local Services  
Division**

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**By Email & Post**

31<sup>st</sup> July 2023

Mr. Eamonn Hunt  
Local Government Management Agency  
Local Government House  
35-39 Ushers Quay  
Dublin 8

### **Local Authority Veterinary Services**

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Dear Mr. Hunt

Following retirements, resignations, and 1 RIP over the last 5 years, there are vacant wholetime veterinary inspector posts in South Dublin, Meath, Westmeath, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford, Cork and Kildare. This equates to approximately 25% of the total number of posts in the country.

It appears that these posts have been left vacant by local authorities in the expectation that the veterinary service will be transferred to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM). There is currently no undertaking by the DAFM that such a transfer will take place and neither has a proposal been tabled with us to commence negotiations.

Fórsa wrote to the relevant local authorities last Autumn highlighting the vacant posts and the obvious risks, namely:

- lack of regulation and enforcement of food safety legislation in the food businesses supervised by these local authorities,
- potential for a public health food poisoning emergency due to the failure to properly regulate these businesses.

Only Tipperary County Council took affirmative action by employing a veterinary inspector, albeit on a fixed-term contract since June.

There is now a major additional concern about these vacant posts in the context of Brexit.

[2]

From 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023, food businesses exporting meat and meat products to Britain and to the EU using Britain as a land-bridge, will require the issuance of Veterinary Export Health Certificates by their competent authority for each consignment. Where the food business is supervised by councils, the local authority is the Competent Authority. Such certificates may only be issued by an official veterinarian. Wholetime veterinary inspectors are official veterinarians and are authorised to issue certificates. Private veterinary practitioners are not.

Currently, eight [8] local authorities are regulating food business operators who export to Britain and to the EU using the British land-bridge. This new British Export Certification system is an additional official control task required of the local authority veterinary service. It is included in the service contract between the FSAI and local authorities.

This function will require on site visits and inspections for each consignment of meat and/or meat product exported. In some local authorities the burden of certification will be substantial equating almost to a full-time job. In all instances, certification may be required at short notice, on weekends, outside office hours and during holidays and other leave. To date, there has been no extra allocation of resources to carry out this function nor has there been a reduction of other work functions. With the existing complement of staff, this service cannot be delivered. This will have serious economic ramifications for the businesses concerned.

Fórsa requests an urgent meeting with the LGMA to address the vacant veterinary inspector posts and the associated lack of resources/preparedness available to carry out British export-related duties from this November.

Yours sincerely

**Richy Carrothers**  
**Head of Division**

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