

[The Animal and Plant Health Agency receives £1.4 billion budget boost for world-leading Weybridge Laboratory](#)

The UK's world-leading scientific and veterinary capability will be enhanced after a £1.4 billion investment boost to the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) to protect the country against the increasing threats of animal and plant diseases.

The new funding, announced by the Chancellor in the [Budget](#) on Wednesday 11 March, will be used to redevelop and future-proof the current Weybridge facility, a unique site with specialist research and laboratory facilities and capabilities for animal health science and disease control. The money will ensure the UK continues to be a world-leading science capability and safeguard the agency's role in fighting current and emerging animal and plant diseases.

The APHA is responsible for safeguarding animal and plant health for the benefit of the people, the environment and the economy. This has included providing scientific evidence and advice to government in controlling outbreaks of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001, testing several thousand samples for Avian Influenza (bird flu) during outbreaks in the winter of 2016/17 and recent research that has paved the way for field trials of a cattle vaccine to combat bovine tuberculosis (bTB). APHA is currently supporting PHE in the government's response to the coronavirus outbreak.

This investment will help the UK economy by protecting against animal and human disease risks. The UK currently exports £4.2bn of livestock, meat and meat products, dairy and animal by-products per year. These exports are safeguarded by the services that APHA provides and the investment will enhance the UK's international reputation as a safe trading partner in the food and farming sectors, supercharging the opportunities for global trade. This investment will also attract high-quality scientists and technical experts, making it an even more attractive place to work.

Christine Middlemiss, UK Chief Veterinary Officer said:

It is great to see that the UK's science capability is being recognised and invested in even further by the government.

The UK is already a global leader in animal health science and we have some of the best scientists in the world. This investment will safeguard and amplify our ability to collaborate and influence globally .

Lord Gardiner, Defra Biosecurity Minister said:

This new Government investment reflects APHA's world leading reputation and essential role at the heart of UK science, disease prevention, and rapid response to disease outbreaks. I am delighted as this funding will help ensure the UK continues to be a leading voice globally on science and biosecurity".

Chris Hadkiss, Chief Executive of APHA said:

This is fantastic news for everyone at APHA and the wider Defra group as this gives the financial investment to ensure we can continue to enhance our crucial and valuable role in animal health science and in providing our emergency response to disease outbreaks.

The financial commitment also highlights how the government recognises our international reputation as experts in animal and plant health science and the critical role we have in protecting the UK and the economy from animal disease risk.

APHA Weybridge provides expert advice to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Organisation for Animal Health and the World Health Organisation, as the international reference laboratory for a large range of animal diseases.