

Press release: Celebrating 100 years of scientific expertise: APHA's Weybridge laboratory reaches its centenary

The Weybridge site is an internationally recognised veterinary research and laboratory testing facility. It has a remit to protect the nation from a wide range of diseases which can affect both livestock and in some instances, human health.

Most recently Weybridge tested several thousand samples for avian influenza following the outbreak of the H5N8 HPAI virus in farmed and wild birds found in the United Kingdom (UK) and across Europe in winter 2016/17. It was at the heart of the UK and European Union (EU) science response, providing scientific evidence and advice to government in controlling the outbreak.

Weybridge tackles disease on the farm, through the food chain to the consumer as is demonstrated by its work on food-borne bacteria such as Salmonella and E-coli. It undertakes a wide range of diagnostic and international trade testing, including rabies testing to confirm vaccination success under the Pet Travel Scheme. It is also at the forefront of research for bovine tuberculosis (TB) and undertakes vital work on the global problem of antimicrobial resistance.

APHA's Chief Executive Officer Chris Hadkiss said:

I am very proud to be the Chief Executive of an agency which has a laboratory with such a long and prestigious history. The work carried out at the Weybridge site has earned great respect on a global level for the advances it has made in both veterinary and scientific research. Such an accomplishment is of course due to the very high calibre of staff who have worked and continue to work with such dedication.

Over the past 100 years the laboratory has continued to provide vital services to the nation during 2 world wars, has aided the eradication of major diseases within the UK such as rabies and foot and mouth disease, and has identified new diseases, including BSE in the 1980s. It continues to undertake vital research that will benefit both human and animal health in the UK and across the world.

UK Chief Veterinary Officer Nigel Gibbens said:

The work of government and private veterinarians and the work

undertaken at Weybridge is inextricably linked in protecting animals in agriculture, the food supply and human health. Just as 100 years ago, vets responding to suspicion of notifiable or new and emerging disease gather samples on farm, which are sent to Weybridge where vital testing and analysis takes place to reach a diagnosis.

The APHA's Weybridge laboratory has an impressive record in responding quickly and effectively to new diseases in animals and significantly advancing our understanding of how we can control them. It is reassuring to know that this work still continues to this day and will do so into the future.

History

APHA's central laboratory has been based at the same site since 1917, when it was known as the Addlestone Institute. The laboratory's origins can however be traced back to 1894, when a veterinary diagnostic service was established in a single basement room at Whitehall, London. In 1917, the Addlestone Institute was run under the directorship of Sir Stewart Stockman, the Chief Veterinary Officer of the day, and was staffed by six veterinary officers and nine support staff.

The site continued to expand, particularly throughout the 1930s. It was at this time that TM Doyle, based at the laboratory, discovered a new disease in poultry which he named 'Newcastle disease', after it was detected on a farm in Newcastle upon Tyne.

During the Second World War, the number of staff almost doubled and women were employed at the laboratory for the first time. The laboratory played an important role in protecting the national food supply in helping to prevent diseases that could impact on animal production. In 1939 it also began an urgent programme for the mass production of anthrax vaccine and antiserum so the country would be able to respond to the threat of a biological warfare emergency.

More recent past achievements include eradicating swine fever in the 1960s, characterising the first case of BSE in the 1980s (and then in 2004 confirming the first case in the USA) and developing the first licensed vaccine for TB in badgers in 2009.

Today and the future

Today the laboratory continues to be at the forefront of veterinary research and diagnosis. There are around 800 people occupying the site, which includes teams not just from APHA but also other parts of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and its agencies who are specialists in science, policy making, administration and farm working.

In recognition of the vital work undertaken at Weybridge, APHA has recently secured £60m capital investment from the government to further develop the

site as well as APHA's regional Veterinary Investigation Centres.

Despite the passing of 100 years, APHA's scientific aims remain much the same – that is to protect Great Britain against the threat and impact of a wide variety of animal diseases and other species risks, many of which affect humans.

To read more about the work undertaken at APHA's Weybridge laboratory and its history take a look at the [APHA science blog](#) and the [Government Veterinary Services blog](#).

Press release: Freshers warned against self-prescribing: you're not doctors yet

As another academic year begins, freshers and university students are being warned of the possible dangers to their health from self-prescribing and self-medicating with powerful prescription medicines.

The purchasing of prescription only medicines such as anti-anxiety medicines and benzodiazepines outside the regulated supply chain remains prevalent despite repeated warnings against self-medication.

When buying medicines outside the regulated supply chain you risk ending up with potentially dangerous or useless unlicensed medicines sold by illegal online suppliers. It also increases the risk of being ripped off through credit card fraud or having your identity stolen.

MHRA is running the #FakeMeds campaign to help students protect their health and money, with tips on how to avoid potentially dangerous or useless medicines sold by illegal online suppliers.

MHRA Head of Enforcement, Alastair Jeffrey, said:

Purchasing medicines outside the regulated supply chain has inherent dangers as there is no assurance of quality and standards. Medicines purchased in this way could have the wrong active ingredient, no active ingredient, or indeed the incorrect dosage.

Prescription only medicines are, by their very nature, potent and should only be prescribed by a doctor or appropriate healthcare professional. We would advise people not to buy medicines from unregulated sources as they pose a danger to their health.

Self-diagnosis and self-medication can be dangerous. If you have a

concern about your health, visit your GP, get a correct diagnosis and if medicines are prescribed, buy them from a legitimate source.

Be careful buying medicines online – criminals are known to exploit vulnerable people by supplying medicines through unregulated websites and stealing their credit card details.

Visit www.gov.uk/fakemedes for tips on buying medicines safely online and how to avoid unscrupulous sites.

News story: Georgia v Wales – 2018 FIFA World Cup Qualifier: Travel Advice

Date: Friday 6 October 2017

Venue: Boris Paichadze Dinamo Arena, Tbilisi, Georgia [Dinamo Arena](#)

Kick off time: 8pm local time (BST +3)

As well as this advice, check out our [travel advice for Georgia](#)

Passports and visas

If you're travelling to Georgia on a British passport from the UK you won't need a visa, but your passport should be valid for at least 6 months after entry. We strongly advise you to take out comprehensive [travel and medical insurance](#) even if you are only going for one night. It could save you a lot of money if you get into difficulties.

Getting to and from the airport

Tbilisi airport

Airport taxis can be found directly outside arrivals. You can also order a taxi by phone or app. Lists of taxi companies can be found at the [Georgian Yell website](#). Usually taxis aren't metered. If you prefer a metered taxi specify when ordering and insist the driver uses the meter. Or, if there is no meter, ensure you agree a price before getting in the car. The price from the airport to the city centre should be around 30 GEL = £10 and the journey to the city centre takes 20-30 minutes depending on traffic.

City Bus N 37 operates everyday between the city and the airport. The ticket price is 0.5 GEL = 20 pence. Bus schedules can be found on the [Tbilisi](#)

[Transport Company website.](#)

The airport railway station is located in front of the airport passenger terminal, next to the car park. Train tickets can be bought at the station. Trains to Tbilisi Central Station cost 0.5 GEL = 20 pence and take 35 minutes but are infrequent. They currently run twice a day at: 8:35am – 9:10am and 5:40pm – 6:15pm (from airport railway station to the Central Station); and 7:50am – 8:25am and 4:55pm – 5:30pm (from the Central Station to the airport railway station).

For more information about Tbilisi International Airport, please visit [Tbilisi Airport website.](#)

Railway information centre: 1331 (both local mobile and landline).

Kutaisi Airport

The Georgian Bus Company run buses from Kutaisi International Airport to Tbilisi city centre (Pushkini Garden on Freedom Square). The ticket price is 20 GEL = £6. Buses depart from the airport regularly.

Taxis are available outside the airport or can be ordered by phone or app. Lists of taxi companies can be found at the [Georgian Yell website](#). The journey from Kutaisi airport to the Tbilisi city centre takes 2-3 hours depending on traffic and is likely to cost around 180 GEL – or £60-£70.

Getting around Tbilisi and to the Boris Paichadze Dinamo Arena

Taxi

Taxis can be flagged down easily on the street, but you should avoid doing so after dark, particularly if you're female, as there have been incidences of robbery. You can also order taxis by phone or app. You should also be wary of taxi drivers who don't know the route to your destination and choose an alternative. Journeys within Tbilisi should cost no more than 5-10 GEL= £2-4. From downtown to the stadium should cost around 8 GEL = £3 and take 15-20 minutes depending on traffic.

Metro

Tbilisi has an efficient, but limited metro system. The station for the stadium is Vagzlis Moedani (Station Square). From the station, turn right down Tevdore Mgvdeli street, then first left down G. Tsabadze street where the stadium will become visible on the right. The walk will take you about 10 minutes.

Bus

Bus N 31 via Pushkini Garden on Freedom Square/ Rustaveli Avenue/ Melikishvili Avenue stops at Vagzlis Moedani (Station Square).

At the match

Wales supporters will be accommodated in the North Stand of the stadium in sections 11 and 12 (see stadium plan) of the first tier, entrance through gate F situated on Tseretlei Avenue. There are up to 30 seats for disabled fans, they should enter the stadium from gate B situated on Tsabadze street.

Access to the stadium

Kick-off is at 8:00pm local time. The gates will open 2 hours before the match. Access to the stadium can be slow, so you should aim to arrive at the stadium at least 90 minutes before kick-off. Ticket checkpoints will be in operation around the area of the stadium; you'll need to show your match ticket to gain access to the complex. Once within the complex, make your way to the turnstiles where your ticket will be scanned. Stewards standing next to the turnstiles will provide assistance if needed. On your way to your seats, police may ask to check any bags. You don't need to carry your passport to the match to gain entry to the stadium.

Restrictions

In addition to items which would usually be prohibited in the UK, please note the following items will not be allowed into the stadium: pyrotechnics, flares, fireworks, smoke bombs, guns, knives, air horns, megaphones, alcohol, cans, glass, plastic bottles or containers, coins, lighters. If you do bring any of these items they will be confiscated by the Georgian authorities. Umbrellas and crash helmets are also not permitted and there are no luggage facilities available to store your belongings. Alcohol is banned.

Local Information

- language – the main language is Georgian
- climate and time – the average temperature in October is around 15-20 C during the day. During the autumn months, it can be rainy and cloudy. You can find weather information on the following [website](#) At the beginning of October, Georgia will be 3 hours ahead of the UK
- electricity – the supply in Tbilisi is generally reliable. Take a two-pin European adapter with you if you need to charge electronic equipment
- disabled travelers – it can be difficult for disabled people to get around Tbilisi. Pavements, even along the main roads, are often uneven and difficult to negotiate for those with disabilities
- photos – don't take pictures of military bases or power installations

Personal security and road safety

- crime levels in Tbilisi are generally low, but muggings do occur from time to time after dark in the centre of the city, particularly around bars and clubs and near dimly lit entrances of private apartments. There have been some reports of sexual assaults by taxi drivers after dark
- take sensible precautions: be vigilant, avoid carrying large sums of money and try to avoid walking alone at night
- look after your personal belongings, in particular your passport and your money. Carry a photocopy of the personal details pages of your passport and keep it in a safe place separate from your passport
- be vigilant at all times when crossing roads; red traffic lights and zebra crossings don't necessarily mean a car will stop. Use the underpasses where available
- when using a taxi make sure it has working seatbelts; many cars are poorly maintained and the standard of driving is erratic
- accidents are common, mainly due to poor or reckless driving and inconsistent enforcement of traffic rules
- if you're in a vehicle that is travelling at an unsafe speed you should instruct the driver to slow down
- respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions at all times. Be mindful of your actions and how they may be interpreted by people of other cultures or religious beliefs
- there are no public toilets in the city so you will have to nip into a café/pub and buy something to use the facilities. Don't urinate in the street – this is an offence

Telephones

- the international dialing code for Georgia is 00995. To call Tbilisi from the UK dial 00995 32 2 then a 6-digit number. Before travelling check with your mobile phone provider that it will work in Tbilisi
- local sim cards can be bought either from official mobile phone shops,

like Beeline, Geocell or Magti; or from some souvenir shops on Rustaveli Avenue. Credit for sim cards can be purchased from Pay-Boxes which can be seen almost everywhere in the streets

Currency

- all goods and services are paid for in local currency (Georgian Lari – GEL). Sterling, US Dollars and Euros are easily exchanged. Major hotels, international supermarkets and restaurants accept credit and debit cards
- ATMs in Tbilisi will almost always accept UK credit and debit cards. Before leaving the UK, let your bank know you are travelling to Georgia

Consular assistance

If there is a genuine emergency during your visit to Tbilisi (e.g. an accident, injury or loss/theft of your passport) call + 995 32 2 27 47 47 and follow the instructions to be put through to a consular officer. If you are arrested, British consular officials can visit you in prison (if you request it) and can put you in touch with local lawyers, if you need one. We can't get you out of prison, represent you in court or pay your bills. If you wish to see a consular official please make this request clear to the local police authorities.

Lost or stolen passports

If your passport is lost or stolen report the loss to the local police as soon as possible and get a copy of the police report. You cannot travel back to the UK without a valid travel document. You will need to apply to the Consular Section of the British Embassy in Tbilisi for an Emergency Travel Document (ETD). Please see our [ETD website](#). The ETD is a temporary travel document which will allow you to return to the UK. You will need to produce the following:

- a copy of the police report reporting the passport stolen
- an acceptable form of identification, if possible (e.g. driving licence and/or photocopy of your lost passport)
- one passport-size photograph
- a fee £ 100 = 350 GEL. Card and cash are both accepted (note: only local currency is acceptable when paying by cash)

- details of your return travel arrangements to the UK (copy of your flight ticket)

Lost or stolen credit/debit cards

If you lose your wallet or purse try to cancel your credit/debit cards as soon as possible. British consular officials cannot give you money to help you return home. You can transfer money from the UK using many of the commercial money transfer agencies in Tbilisi, including Western Union. You can also use most major credit and debit cards to obtain money from ATMs.

Our Address is: 51 Krtsanisi Street, Tbilisi, 0114, Georgia

Embassy telephone number: +995 32 2 27 47 47

E-mail: tbilisi.consularenquiries@fco.gov.uk

Travel Advice: [travel advice for Georgia](#)

The Consular section of the British Embassy in Tbilisi is open to the public from 9:00am – 14:00pm, Monday to Friday.

Emergency services number

Fire, Police, Ambulance: 112.

Maps

[Tbilisi city map](#)

Press release: PM call with President Xi: 25 September 2017

The Prime Minister spoke to President Xi of China earlier today.

They agreed the UK and China should continue to consolidate the “Golden Era” of bilateral relations and deepen our strategic partnership, including on trade and investment, where President Xi noted that Chinese confidence in the UK economy remained very strong and where they agreed there was potential to build an ambitious post-Brexit bilateral trading arrangement, and on security cooperation, where President Xi offered his condolences over the recent London terror attack.

They agreed the situation in North Korea was deeply troubling, and that North Korea’s recent missile tests were a flagrant violation of international

commitments.

They agreed the latest sanctions were a powerful sign of the international community's unity in opposing North Korea's illegal tests and that strict implementation and enforcement of the sanctions was vital.

They agreed that as joint permanent members of the UN Security Council, there was a particular responsibility on the UK and China to help find a diplomatic solution. They agreed the UK and China should continue working closely together to increase pressure on the North Korean regime to abandon its nuclear programme.

News story: Subsidy free solar comes to the UK

The 45 acre Clayhill solar farm and energy storage facility near Flitwick in Bedfordshire, built by energy provider Anesco, is made up of over 30,000 solar panels – enough to power 2,500 homes.

The solar farm will be the first in the UK to be built and operated without Government subsidy, following a fall in the cost of solar panels by two thirds since 2010. To date the industry has successfully installed 12GW of solar capacity across the country.

Battery technology also has an important role to play in making renewable energy a viable part of the UK's energy network by ensuring energy can be captured and stored for use when needed. The Clayhill development features five battery storage units. These help maximise the usable output from renewable power sources such as solar, which generates different amounts of energy depending on the weather.

Claire Perry, Minister for Climate Change and Industry said:

The cost of solar panels and batteries has fallen dramatically over the past few years, and this first subsidy-free development at Clayhill is a significant moment for clean energy in the UK.

Solar panels already provide enough electricity to power 2.7 million homes with 99% of that capacity installed since 2010.

The Government is determined to build on this success and our ambitious Clean Growth Strategy will ensure we continue to lead the world on the transition to a low carbon economy.

The Government expects to see more developers install and connect subsidy-

free sites later this year.

Steve Shine OBE, Anesco's Executive Chairman said:

For the solar industry, Clayhill is a landmark development and paves the way for a sustainable future, where subsidies are no longer needed or relied upon. Importantly, it proves that the Government's decision to withdraw subsidies doesn't have to signal the end of solar as a commercially viable technology.

This landmark moment for the clean energy industry comes after the Government set out its plans for a [smarter energy system](#) which set out a future in which energy providers will take advantage of new technologies such as battery storage to benefit consumers.

This was followed by a record amount of renewable capacity being secured in the latest [contracts for difference](#) auction and new Government measures to accelerate investment in clean growth by building on the UK's strength in [green finance](#). There was also confirmation from the Prime Minister that [dirty coal generation](#) would end by 2025.

Today, National Grid announced that more than half the UK's electricity came from low carbon sources in the last three months, making it the 'greenest' summer on record.