National Reference Laboratories (NRLs)

The role of National Reference Laboratories (NRLs) and details of the UK and Northern Ireland (NI) NRLs for food and feed testing

NRLs are specialist laboratories responsible for maintaining standards for the routine testing of feed, food and animal health. They provide advice and support on methods for official control testing, ensuring the delivery of risk-based and proportionate food enforcement to protect consumers.

Food Standards Agency (FSA) has a legal obligation to designate NRLs for food and feed. FSA and Food Standards Scotland (FSS) designated food and feed NRLs for UK. FSA designated food and feed NRLs providing specific EU requirements for Northern Ireland.

Defra has a legal obligation to designate NRLs for animal health and live animals in Great Britain (GB). This role is undertaken by DAERA for Northern Ireland (NI).

In GB, NRLs are designated under the Official Control Regulation (EU) 2017/625 for Official Feed and Food Controls, as amended and retained in UK legislation under Statutory Instrument 2020/1481.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, EU law continues to apply post EU exit in respect of the majority of food and feed hygiene law, as listed in the Northern Ireland Protocol (NIP). This includes the Official Control Regulation (EU) 2017/625 for Official Feed and Food Controls. In accordance with the Northern Ireland Protocol (NIP), the FSA has designated laboratories based in EU Member States to provide required NRL functions under Regulation 2017/625 for Northern Ireland. However, Northern Ireland may still refer to UK NRLs for other functions such as assistance with technical questions and support with proficiency testing beyond that provided by NI specific NRLs.

FSA and FSS designated food and feed NRLs for UK

Feed and Food Additives

Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA)
Sand Hutton
York
YO41 1LZ
Tel: 01904 462000

Foodborne Viruses

Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)
Barrack Road
Weymouth
DT4 8UB
Tel: 01305 206600

Parasites (Echinococcus/ Trichinella/ Anisakis)

Animal & Plant Health Agency (APHA)
National Agri-Food Innovation Campus
Sand Hutton
York
YO41 1LZ
Tel: 01904 462000

Marine Biotoxins and Phytoplankton

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)
Shellfish Toxin Unit - VSD Stormont
Stoney Road
Belfast
BT4 3SD
Tel: 028 9052 5636

Bacterial Contamination of Bivalve Molluscs

Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS)
Barrack Road
Weymouth
DT4 8UB
Tel: 01305 206600

Chemical Hazards

Food and Environment Research Agency (FERA)
Sand Hutton
York
YO41 1LZ
Tel: 01904 462000

Genetically Modified Organisms

Laboratory of the Government Chemist Ltd
Queens Road
Teddington
Middlesex
TW11 0LY
Tel: 020 8943 7000

Antimicrobial resistance

Food, Water & Environment (FWE) Microbiology Network
UK Health & Security Agency (UKHSA)
61 Colindale Avenue

London
NW9 5EQ
Tel: 020 8327 7160/7325

Campylobacter

FW&E Microbiology Network
UKHSA
61 Colindale Avenue
London
NW9 5EQ
Tel: 020 8327 7160/7325

Coagulase positive Staphylococci, including Staphylococccus aureus

FW&E Microbiology Network
UKHSA
61 Colindale Avenue
London
NW9 5EQ
Tel: 020 8327 7160/7325

Escherichia coli, including Verotoxigenic E. Coli (VTEC)

FW&E Microbiology Network
UKHSA
61 Colindale Avenue
London
NW9 5EQ
Tel: 020 8327 7160/7325

Listeria monocytogenes

FW&E Microbiology Network
UKHSA
61 Colindale Avenue
London
NW9 5EQ
Tel: 020 8327 7160/7325

The analysis and testing of Zoonoses (Salmonella)

FW&E Microbiology Network
UKHSA
61 Colindale Avenue
London
NW9 5EQ
Tel: 020 8327 7160/7325

FSA designated food and feed NRLs for Northern Ireland

Additives for use in animal nutrition

Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES)
Institute for Animal Nutrition and Feed
Spargelfeldstrasse 191
1220 Vienna
Austria
Tel: +43 50555 33216
Email: nrl-ni-fsa@ages.at

Antimicrobial resistance

Sciensano
Rue Juliette Wytsmanstraat 14
Brussels
Belgium
1050
Tel: +43 50555 35107
Email: NRL.NI@sciensano.be

Campylobacter

Sciensano
Rue Juliette Wytsmanstraat 14
Brussels
Belgium
1050
Tel: +43 50555 35107
Email: NRL.NI@sciensano.be

Coagulase positive Staphylococci, including Staphylococcus aureus

Sciensano
Rue Juliette Wytsmanstraat 14
Brussels
Belgium
1050
Tel: +43 50555 35107
Email: NRL.NI@sciensano.be

Escherichia coli, including Verotoxigenic E. Coli (VTEC)

Sciensano
Rue Juliette Wytsmanstraat 14
Brussels
Belgium
1050
Tel: +43 50555 35107
Email: NRL.NI@sciensano.be

Foodborne viruses

Sciensano
Rue Juliette Wytsmanstraat 14
Brussels
Belgium

1050
Tel: +43 50555 35107
Email: NRL.NI@sciensano.be

Food Contact Materials

Health Service Executive
Public Analyst Laboratory
Sir Patrick Dun's
Lower Grand Canal Street
Dublin 2
DO2 P667
Tel: +353 (0) 16612022
Email: info.dpal@hse.ie

Genetically modified organisms

Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES)
Institute for Food Safety Vienna
Spargelfeldstrasse 191
1220 Vienna
Austria
Tel: +43 50555 35107
e-mail: nrl-ni-fsa@ages.at

Halogenated persistent organic pollutants (POPs)

To be confirmed.

Listeria monocytogenes

Sciensano
Rue Juliette Wytsmanstraat 14
Brussels
Belgium
1050
Tel: +43 50555 35107
Email: NRL.NI@sciensano.be

Metals and nitrogenous compounds

Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES)
Institute for Animal Nutrition and Feed
Wieningerstraße 8
4020 Linz
Austria
Tel: +43 50555 33216
e-mail: nrl-ni-fsa@ages.at

Monitoring of marine biotoxins

Wageningen Food Safety Research (WFSR)
Akkermaalsbos 2
Wageningen

Netherlands
6708 WB
Tel: +31317 481603
e-mail: mirjam.klijnstra@wurl.nl

Mycotoxins and plant toxins

Wageningen Food Safety Research (WFSR)
Akkermaalsbos 2
Wageningen
Netherlands
6708 WB
Tel: +31317 480256
e-mail: nrl-northernireland.mp@wur.nl

Parasites

To be confirmed.

Processing contaminants

Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety (AGES)
Institute for Food Safety Linz
Wieningerstraße 8
4020 Linz
Austria
Tel: +43 50555 35107
e-mail: nrl-ni-fsa@ages.at

The analysis and testing of Zoonoses (Salmonella)

Sciensano
Rue Juliette Wytsmanstraat 14
Brussels
Belgium
1050
Tel: +43 50555 35107
Email: NRL.NI@sciensano.be

Food Improvement Agents

To be confirmed.