Background & Objectives

The undertaking of a Remote DTAS Audit should be as a matter of last resort in the event of the scheduled physical DTAS Visit being unable to proceed due to national, local or business imposed coronavirus lockdown restrictions. When required to be undertaken, the Remote DTAS Audit needs to ensure that the haulier can provide evidence to enable the DTAS Assessor to effectively assess all relevant DTAS Standards.

Technological Tools

Various technological tools can be used as appropriate and to suit all involved. In reality a combination of the following is realistic. Connectivity on site will also need to be a consideration in terms of choosing the most appropriate technology i.e. mobile phone / 4G signal and access to Wi-Fi. Examples of technologies could include:

- Telephone
- Online meeting e.g. Teams and Zoom
- WhatsApp
- FaceTime
- Email
- Online file sharing e.g. Dropbox / Teams

Structure and Methodology

It is probably easiest to attempt to follow a similar structure to a physical DTAS Visit using various technological tools e.g.

- Opening meeting   Online meeting
- Site and tanker walk round (live wherever possible)   WhatsApp / FaceTime live video feed
- Interview with tanker driver   Telephone
- Review of documents and records   Email / online file sharing
- Closing meeting   Online meeting

As with any physical visit, there is no prescribed structure but instead this needs to reflect the nature of the operation being assessed, availability of people and resources, and individual preferences. Overall however, there is a need to be flexible in the approach adopted. It is acceptable for the assessor to commence reviewing documents and records provided prior to the actual remote audit, however whilst compliance may be identified when reviewing this paperwork before the remote audit, non-conformances cannot be raised before the assessment.

Documents and Records

This undoubtedly presents the biggest single challenge to the haulier. The guidance note "Records Required for DTAS Assessment" provides a useful checklist of the various documents and records required. Suffice to say, for most milk transport operations, the list of these documents can be extensive. Reliance upon the scanning and emailing of copies to the DTAS Assessor can be time consuming, perhaps allowing up to 2 days prior to the remote audit, to ensure that this evidence is available to the DTAS Assessor for review on the day of the audit. If possible, online file sharing may permit considerable time savings.

In order to ensure confidentiality and compliance with GDPR, assessor access to online file sharing should be disabled immediately after the remote audit has been completed and / or any downloaded copies of files deleted. Furthermore, the haulier can choose the technology for the live-stream and can issue the invite to the assessor (date and time agreed with the assessor) which allows them total control of the technology. Assessors have been made aware that no recording of the live-stream should be undertaken by the assessor during the remote assessment. If the technology used has a recording function, this must be disabled during the remote assessment.

Time Allowance

In practice, the time taken to complete the actual Remote DTAS Audit will probably be similar to the time taken for a physical DTAS Visit, however considerable time needs to be allowed by the haulier prior to the remote audit to provide all necessary documentary evidence to the DTAS Assessor e.g. up to 2 days.