Duties of the Biological Safety Officer

**Main purpose**
To advise the Unit Director on all matters relating to the use of biological agents within that establishment.

**Training and competence requirements**
The BSO should have experience in working with biological agents in a containment laboratory and, where applicable, a working knowledge of the assessment of risks for work with genetically modified organisms. The BSO must be conversant with MRC policy and guidance on work with biological agents and where appropriate with that of the host institution. Directors must be satisfied of the competence of the BSO and where necessary ensure training is provided.
The letter of appointment should make clear where any executive authority is given to a named individual member of staff.

The duties may include, to:

- Ensure, in collaboration with the Line Manager, that MRC policy and, where applicable, the rules and procedures of the host institution relating to work with biological agents are fully implemented in the establishment
- Ensure that consent as required by the relevant legislation is obtained from the Health and Safety Executive for all work proposed with Class 2 and above projects with genetically modified organisms
- Ensure that licences as required by the relevant legislation are obtained from the proper authorities for work proposed with specified animal or plant pathogens*
- Ensure, with the other members of the local biological safety committee, that all notifications of work with genetically modified organisms are made at the appropriate times
- Advise on risk assessment for all proposed work with biological agents and the development of codes of practice
- Advise on waste disposal policy and arrangements
- Advise on disinfection policy
- Prepare contingency plans for action following accidents and incidents involving biological agents
- Advise and assist management in investigations following accidents and incidents involving biological agents
- Carry out periodic inspections of containment facilities
- Assist team leaders in assessing training needs for those working with biological agents

* The Authorities are: a) in England - the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food; b) in Scotland - the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department and c) in Wales - the Welsh Office Agriculture Department.