Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

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MHRA Website

[redacted]

Our Ref: **FOI2026/00689**

24 July 2026

Dea[redacted]

Thank you for your Freedom of Information (FoI) request received on 26 June. You wrote:

> *Thank you for the information you have sent me. but this is wrong.*
> *I am wanting an updated one off this please*
> *Please see the attached link.*

MHRA Response

Firstly, apologies for the confusion with the discrepancy in data provided in FOI 22/762 and FOI 2026/00581. However, upon review of your request I have determined that the information regarding batch you have requested is exempt under section 12 of the FOIA. Section 12 of the Act allows public authorities to refuse requests where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate limit, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the estimated cost of one person spending 24 working hours in determining whether the department holds the information, locating, retrieving and extracting the information.

The reason for this exemption, is that “Batch number” is a free text field on a Yellow Card form and as such includes vast amounts of variation where reporters have mistyped, added spaces/hyphens, or included expiry dates, for example. Upon review of the data held, there are 10940 variations of the batch number field for COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine Yellow Card reports. To be able to provide this information, initially all variations will have to be reviewed in order to discount any that definitively do not relate to batch numbers.

Any remaining variations will then need cross-checking against known batch numbers to exclude any that firstly do not correspond to the COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine but to other vaccines, if for instance more than one vaccine has been reported in a single report. Up to 24 March 2021 approximately 34 batches of COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine were used in the UK.

Subsequently, the four most common variations of batch number are used to group into established batches:

- A space between letters and numbers
- A dash between letters and numbers
- Variations between the number 0 and the letter O

- Variations between the number 2 and the letter Z *

After this is complete the remaining batch number variations are reviewed to ensure no further variation should be included where it is obvious the text provided relates to a known batch number. Once the variations are grouped, a report is built and then run via our systems for each batch. Lastly after each run is complete the data needs to be put into an acceptable format to complete retrieval.

For FOI 22/762, groupings on batch number were done subjectively, and not using the above method, therefore the data was subject to human error as grouping the batches relies on human interpretation. Subsequently, we have removed FOI 22/762 from the public website due to the incorrect process done to retrieve the data, as it can be seen in the table that there are some duplications of batch numbers, which have been put in the table as separate batch numbers.

When section 12 is applied, we are required to provide advice and assistance to the requester, to help them make a new request which could be dealt with within the 24-hour appropriate limit. We can provide what you have requested but for the 5 batch numbers associated with the highest volume of reports, with the above variations of batch number as stated. If you are interested in receiving data under a refined request as suggested, please submit a new FOI request.

Yours sincerely,

MHRA Central Freedom of Information Team
Medicines & Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

Your right to complain under the Freedom of Information Act

If you are not happy with this response you may request an internal review by e-mailing foi.request@mhra.gov.uk or by writing to: MHRA Central Freedom of Information Team, 10 South, Colonnade, Canary Wharf, London, E14 4PU

Any request for an internal review must be received by us within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please note we are not obliged to provide a review if it is requested after more than 40 working days.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner's Office for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted our own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.
Website: ICO FOI and EIR complaints or telephone 0303 123 1113.

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