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6 January 2026

Your reference: GB2514773.7
Application No.: AgroIntelAI-Traceability-2025

Latest date for reply: 7 September 2027

Patents Act 1977: Combined Search Report under Section 17(5)(b) and Abbreviated Examination Report under Section 18(3)

Although your application qualified for combined search and examination, I have not performed a search in relation to your application. I have set out my reasoning in the attached abbreviated examination report.

To help you understand the search report, and other parts of the patent application process, we have created a series of Factsheets. These may be downloaded from our website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/patent-fact-sheets>. Alternatively, paper copies of these fact sheets can be requested by calling our Information Centre (0300 300 2000) or emailing enquiries@ipo.gov.uk

Your acceleration request

I can confirm that the request for Green Channel acceleration made in your letter dated 7 September has been accepted, and the declination of this request made in my previous letter dated 27 October was erroneous. I apologise for any inconvenience caused.

Seeking professional advice

As the law concerning patent applications is complex, you should consider seeking advice from a patent attorney (also known as a patent agent) or other professional adviser. Patent attorneys are legally qualified and independently regulated. There are other patent advisers, consultants and inventor-support organisations who may also be able to help or advise you.

I am not allowed to recommend any particular patent attorney or other adviser. However, most classified telephone directories include a list of patent attorneys. You can also obtain a list of patent attorneys from the Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys (website: www.cipa.org.uk or telephone: 020 7405 9450).



Help and guidance may also be sought from Patent Libraries around the UK. Further details can be found at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/patent-information-centres

Opportunity to file amendments

By the latest date given above you should deal with the points raised in the report by filing amendments. These should be in the form of retyped pages. However if you do not agree with any part of the report, then you should explain your reasons in a letter. I will consider your response and will reply in a timescale consistent with our current target:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/timeliness-target-for-re-examination-of-patent-applications>

Important: you should avoid giving any additional technical information about the invention (such as a modification) either by way of amendment or in an accompanying letter, as this would prevent you from subsequently obtaining a patent based on this information.

Consequence of failing to reply

The application may be refused unless you reply to the report by the date set.

Further action

If after receiving your reply there are still points which need attention, I will contact you again. Should we still disagree, then the matter can be referred to a senior officer who will consider the issues afresh. You would have the opportunity, in this event, to come to the Office and present your opinion personally.

Publication

Your application will be published after 18 months have passed from its filing date, or from its priority date if this is earlier. You will not receive any reminders that publication is imminent.

On the date of publication details of your application, including your name and address, will be entered in the Register of Patents and will become publicly available, including on our website. Some documents and correspondence from your application file will also be made publicly available on our website at <https://www.search-for-intellectual-property.service.gov.uk/>

WARNING – The only way to prevent publication of your application is to withdraw your application before we send it for publication (see “Withdrawal” below).



Withdrawal

You can withdraw your application through your intellectual property (IP) account online or email withdraw@ipo.gov.uk, stating the patent application number you wish to withdraw and indicating that you are the applicant. If you withdraw your application before we send it for publication, it will not be published. To prevent publication, you must withdraw your application no later than the day before the 18-month anniversary of the earliest date.

What to do next?

You should reply in writing by the “latest date for reply” given above, by:

1. Responding to the points raised in the abbreviated examination report by filing amendments to the claims and/or giving reasons why you do not agree with any part of the report. I will then reconsider whether a search would serve a useful purpose; or
2. Withdrawing your application (see above).

If you choose to do nothing then your application may be refused and it may still be published if it meets the requirements for publication (see above).

If you file new or amended claims before we have prepared your application for publication they will be included in the published document.

Important: you should avoid giving any additional technical information about the invention (such as a modification) either by way of amendment or in an accompanying letter, as this would prevent you from subsequently obtaining a patent based on this information.

Correspondence

You should note that the Office is unable to accept documents such as amendments to the specification transmitted by e-mail. If you wish to submit your official response to my report electronically you may do so using the web filing service available on the Office's website. Otherwise, your response must be delivered by post, fax or hand.

If you write to the Office less than 3 weeks before we are due to send your application for publication, please mark your letter prominently: **“URGENT - PUBLICATION IMMINENT”**.

Further Information and Enquiries

Further information on patents is available at: www.gov.uk/patent-your-invention

You are strongly advised to direct any questions that you may have to a patent attorney or other professional adviser (please see above). However we may be able to assist with general enquiries about the processing of your application. You can contact us by email at patentprocess@ipo.gov.uk or by telephone on 0300 300 2000.



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Yours faithfully,

Josh Taylor
Patent Examiner



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Patents Act 1977
Combined Search Report under Section 17(5)(b) and Abbreviated Examination
Report under Section 18(3)

Requirements of the Patent Act

1. A granted patent provides the patent owner with a legal right which can be used to challenge others who may be copying the invention covered by that patent. In the UK, patents are granted under the legislation set out in the Patents Act 1977, which sets out a number of requirements relating to the contents of patent applications. Your application does not appear to meet all these requirements for the reasons discussed in detail below.
2. Because of these reasons, I do not believe that there is any likelihood of your application being granted, therefore I have not performed a search for your application.

Voluntary Amendments

3. Rule 31 of the Patents Rules states that amendments to the specification prior to the examiner's search are allowable only with the comptroller's consent, and only if a reason is provided for the amendment. Section 76(3) of the Patents Act states that patent specifications cannot be amended after the filing date to include new information. We call this new information 'added matter' This means that the comptroller will not consent to any voluntary amendment that contains added matter.
4. On 9 September you filed an amended description and claims. The covering letter for these amendments submits that the reason for them is to overcome formatting deficiencies and that substance of the application is identical to what was originally filed. However, the text of these amendments differs substantially from what was originally filed and introduces matter that was not present in the original filed specification, such as the generation of compliance certificates. These amendments to the description and claims are therefore unallowable.
5. On 6th October you filed a further amended description. A reason was provided for the amendment and I am satisfied that it does not add matter to the application. This amendment to the specification is therefore allowable.
6. On 12th November you filed a further amended description and amended claims. A reason was provided for these amendments and I am satisfied that they do not add matter to the application. These amendments to the specification are therefore allowable.



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7. The application will therefore proceed with the amendments that were filed 12th of November.

Your Letter of 12 November 2025

8. Regarding point 3.3 of your letter you submit that ‘the contribution lies in the secure acquisition, fusion, and authentication of sensor data originating from farm animals’. In order for this to be the case, the specification would have to teach the reader a new method of acquiring, processing, and authenticating data however, it does not provide any technical information relating to these processes other than references to known encryption methods such as SHA-256. In the absence of any new technical information, these processes must be considered to be achieved via conventional means, with the result that they cannot solely form the contribution.

9. Regarding point 3.4 of your letter, you submit that the claim includes technical features, such as sensors and data-processing. Whilst I agree that these are ‘technical’ features in the typical sense of the word, what the Aerotel test requires is that these features are used within a system that provides a technical effect such as effecting an external technical process, causing the computer to act in an improved or more efficient manner, or overcoming a technical problem. As will be explained below, I do not believe that the contribution provides the requisite technical benefit, therefore the inclusion of *prima facie* technical features such as sensors and data processors does not overcome the computer program exclusion.

10. Regarding point 3.5 of your letter, you submit that signposts 1, 3, 4 & 5 point towards the invention having a technical effect. I am unpersuaded by the supporting reasoning given, and I have addressed the signposts in detail later in this report.

11. Regarding point 3.6 of your letter, you submit that the invention has the technical contribution of negating the need for manual record-keeping and verification however, record-keeping methods are considered to be administrative in nature, therefore falling within the business method exclusion. Methods falling within excluded categories are *de facto* non-technical, therefore the submitted contribution is not technical.

12. Regarding point 3.7 of your letter, you submit that the present invention is analogous to that considered in *Vicom Systems Inc* T0208/84 [1987], in which a mathematical method for processing image data was found to be technical and non-excluded. The application in *Vicom* taught a novel and inventive method for processing image data, therefore the



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contribution lay in the method by which the image data was processed and the results thereof. In contrast, your specification does not provide a novel and inventive method of processing data, meaning the contribution lies more broadly in the sequence of steps for processing the data. As such, I do not agree that there is any similarity between the facts of your case and that of *Vicom*.

Your invention is excluded from being patented

13. Section 1(2) of The Patents Act lists a number of things for which we cannot grant a patent. This includes business methods and computer programs. In *Aerotel Ltd v Telco Holdings Ltd Ors Rev 1* [2007] RPC 7 (*Aerotel/Macrossan*) the Court of Appeal set out a four-step test for determining whether an invention is excluded under section 1(2). In *Comptroller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks v Emotional Perception AI Ltd* [2024] EWCA Civ 825 the Court of Appeal applied the *Aerotel* test and expressed it as follows:

- a. properly construe the claim;
- b. identify the actual contribution (although at the application stage this might have to be the alleged contribution);
- c. ask whether it falls solely within the excluded subject matter;
- d. if the third step has not covered it, check whether the actual or alleged contribution is actually technical.

14. I will follow this test accordingly.

Step a) Construe the claim

15. The claim is clear and can be construed as it written.

Step b) Identify the contribution

16. The specification does not disclose any novel or inventive hardware, such as a new type of sensor or a new method of transmitting data from a sensor. As such, all of the hardware recited in the independent claim must be assumed to be conventional, such that it does not form part of the contribution. The contribution must therefore lie in the software.

17. The specification also does not disclose any novel or inventive software processing methods, such as a new method of encoding and transmitting sensor data, or a new method of generating cryptographic hashes. The contribution must therefore lie solely in the sequence of operations that are carried out by the software.



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18. In light of the above, I consider the contribution of your invention to be:

A computer-implemented system for recording animal livestock information. The system receives physical and genetic source data relating to an animal, fuses the received data, generates a cryptographic hash based on the fused data, and records the hash on a distributed ledger. The system also generates a livestock passport that references the recorded hash. The passport verifies the animal's reproductive source, as well as providing its health history and welfare compliance.

Steps c & d) Check if the contribution falls within solely within excluded subject matter and if so, is it technical?

19. The contribution is a computer-implemented system. As per *Symbian v Comptroller General of Patents* [2008] EWCA Civ 1066, computer-implemented systems can avoid exclusion under Section 1(2) if the contribution demonstrates a technical effect. In order to assess whether the contribution is excluded as a computer program I must assess whether it is technical, therefore steps c and d of the test will be conducted together.

20. Having considered your application at length, I am of the opinion that the contribution does not demonstrate the required technical effect to avoid the computer program exclusion. As discussed above, the contribution does not include any novel hardware or software, with the result that it is directed solely towards a sequence of operations for processing data relating to an animal. Whilst this sequence of data-processing operations may constitute a novel method of record-keeping for livestock, record-keeping methods in general are considered to be administrative in nature, therefore falling in the business method exclusion.

21. The decision in *AT&T Knowledge Ventures LP and Cvon Innovations Ltd v Comptroller General of Patents* [2009] EWHC 343 (Pat) provides guidance in the form of a number of signposts which may indicate that a computer program provides a technical contribution. The signposts were updated in *HTC Europe Co Ltd v Apple Inc* [2013] EWCA Civ 451 and are as follows:

- i) whether the claimed technical effect has a technical effect on a process which is carried on outside the computer;
- ii) whether the claimed technical effect operates at the level of the architecture of the computer; that is to say whether the effect is produced irrespective of the data being processed or the applications being run;



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iii) whether the claimed technical effect results in the computer being made to operate in a new way;

iv) whether the program makes the computer a better computer in the sense of running more efficiently and effectively as a computer;

v) whether the perceived problem is overcome by the claimed invention as opposed to merely being circumvented.

22. I will consider each signpost accordingly.

i) Does the claimed technical effect have a technical effect on a process which is carried on outside the computer?

23. As noted above, the only external process that the invention has an effect on is the administrative process of keeping records of livestock. This is not a technical process therefore the first signpost is not met.

24. In point 3.5 of your letter you submit that the contribution has the technical effect of improved physiological measurement and earlier detection of welfare decline, but I have not found any technical information in your specification to support this submission.

ii) Does the claimed technical effect operate at the architectural level of the computer, i.e. is the effect produced irrespective of the data being processed?

25. The contribution is entirely directed towards the processing of livestock-related data, and so any effect cannot be said to be produced irrespective of the data being processed. The second signpost is therefore not met.

iii) Does the claimed technical effect result in the computer operating in a new way?

26. The sequence of operations carried out by the program are done so using entirely conventional means, therefore the program cannot be said to make the computer operate in a new way. The third signpost is therefore not met.

27. In point 3.5 of your letter you submit that canonicalizing and hashing sensor streams into Merkle roots rather database entry constitutes the computer acting in a new way. Firstly, it is well known in the field of cryptography that Merkle roots can be used to verify data in a Merkle tree, therefore I do not agree this process is new. Secondly, even if it was new, it still wouldn't result in the computer operating in a new way; the computer may carry out a different sequence of operations but each operation would be carried out via conventional means.



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iv) Does the program make the computer a better a computer in the sense of running more efficiently or effectively?

28. The program has no effect on the efficiency or effectiveness of the hardware on which it runs. The fourth signpost is therefore not met.

29. In point 3.5 of your letter you submit that the contribution has the technical effect of increasing the reliability and efficiency of data transmission, but I have not found any technical information in your specification to support this submission.

iv) Is the perceived problem overcome by the claimed invention or merely circumvented?

30. The invention may well have the benefit of avoiding the need for manual livestock record-keeping, but this is not a technical problem therefore the contribution does not become technical by dint of being the solution.

31. In point 3.5 of your letter you submit that the contribution overcomes data-tampering problems using cryptographic means, but I have not found any technical information in your specification to support this submission.

32. In light of the above, I consider your invention to be excluded from patentability due to being a computer program as such, and also due to being a business method as such. I have not identified any subject matter in your specification that would provide grounds for an amendment that would overcome this issue.