



## APHA Briefing Note 01/19

### Annual surveillance TB testing for lower risk herds in the six-monthly testing parts of the Edge Area in England

#### Purpose

1. To inform Official Veterinarians that from May 2019 cattle herds in the six-monthly testing parts of the Edge Area in England that meet certain criteria will be eligible to move to annual surveillance testing.

#### Background

2. The Edge Area was established in January 2013 as part of the government's Strategy for achieving officially TB free (OTF) status for England.
3. Despite Defra implementing enhanced TB surveillance and control measures in cattle from 2013, the overall incidence of bovine TB in the Edge Area is still increasing.
4. In January 2018, changes were made to the Edge Area boundaries and counties that were previously split between Edge and HRA were incorporated fully into the Edge Area. Changes were also made to routine surveillance testing in some Edge Area counties.
5. Defra's public consultation in 2017 on the introduction of routine six-monthly surveillance testing in the High Risk Area (HRA) included a proposal that less frequent surveillance testing of cattle herds should be allowed depending on their TB histories and herd health accreditation for bovine TB.
6. This policy change recognises and rewards those cattle keepers with a reduced risk of suffering a TB breakdown and/or who are proactively trying to increase their resilience to bovine TB by participating in a Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHeCS) accredited bovine TB health scheme. It will also help to incentivise other keepers to reduce the bovine TB threat to their herds.

### Annual surveillance testing for lower risk herds in the six-monthly testing parts of the Edge Area

7. All cattle herds in the high bovine TB incidence counties of Cheshire, Oxfordshire, and Warwickshire and in parts of Berkshire, Hampshire and Derbyshire are subject to routine six-monthly surveillance testing.
8. From May 2019, cattle herds in these parts of the Edge Area will be eligible for annual surveillance testing if they meet **either** of the following criteria:
  - the herd has been in existence for at least six years and has not had a TB breakdown in that six year period. A single break from keeping cattle of less than four months during the six year period is permitted. Additionally, breaks up to one month are permitted when assessing eligibility to account for all-in, all-out systems.
  - the herd is registered to a bovine TB health scheme accredited under the Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHeCS) at level 1 or above
9. APHA will identify all cattle herds in the six-monthly testing parts of the Edge Area that qualify for annual surveillance testing under the eligibility criteria.
10. The testing interval of all cattle herds that meet the eligibility criteria will be amended from six-monthly to annual. APHA will make an initial assessment of eligibility in December 2018. After the initial assessment, APHA will continue to check eligibility every six months.
11. Depending on the timing of the next scheduled routine six-monthly herd test, the following action will be taken by APHA;
  - For routine six-monthly herd tests with earliest start dates from 1 January to 30 April 2019, the test will still go ahead as planned. The next routine herd test after this will be scheduled 12 months from the due date of the last test
  - For routine six-monthly herd tests with an earliest start date of 1 May 2019 and beyond, APHA will cancel the test and re-schedule it for 12 months from the due date of the last routine herd test
12. APHA will stagger delivery of this change, prioritising routine tests with the earliest start dates.

### **Communications with Keepers**

13. APHA will write to all eligible cattle keepers in the six-monthly testing parts of the Edge Area to let them know that their herd qualifies for annual surveillance testing, and that their herd's testing interval will be amended.

14. APHA will start sending letters to keepers from January 2019, although no changes to scheduled testing will take place for those herds due to start their test before May 2019.
15. Upon changing to annual surveillance testing, keepers wishing to amend the testing window of their annual herd test are being advised to check with their OV/PVS that they can accommodate the proposed change before contacting APHA. The test must be within 12 months of the previous test, and the test window can only be amended once. If the test window has already opened then the test will need to be completed.
16. If a keeper wishes for their herd to remain on six-monthly surveillance testing then they must notify APHA of their preference and their herd's testing interval will remain unchanged.

### **Relevant Documents**

17. None for PVSs/OVs

### **Further Information**

18. Detailed Q&A on the changes to surveillance testing in the Edge Area is available on the TB hub <http://www.tbhub.co.uk/>
19. More information about CHeCS is available on their website <https://www.checs.co.uk/>

### **Contact APHA**

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