



## APHA Briefing Note 09/17

### Bovine TB update – Enhanced cattle control measures in England from April

#### Purpose

1. To inform Official Veterinarians (OVs) of the new enhanced cattle control measures being introduced in England from 1 April 2017.

#### Background

2. Following a public consultation, Defra announced in December 2016 that enhanced cattle controls for bovine TB (bTB) will be introduced in England as part of the Government's comprehensive eradication strategy.
3. Most of the measures will be introduced from 1 April 2017; however some will be phased in over the course of 2017/18.

#### New cattle controls from 1 April

4. **Wider use of interferon (IFN) gamma blood testing in the HRA.**  
Compulsory IFN gamma testing will be applied to help resolve TB breakdowns with lesion and/or culture positive animals in the HRA where any of the following three criteria are met:
  - (i) *Criterion 1:* The APHA veterinary investigation concludes that the most likely bTB transmission route for the affected herd was contact with infected cattle and measures are in place to prevent further spread of disease from this source
  - (ii) *Criterion 2:* The infected herd is located in one of the areas where at least two years of effective licensed badger population control have been completed

(iii) *Criterion 3*: There is clear evidence that repeated skin testing of the herd has failed to resolve a bTB incident.

This measure will be gradually rolled out from 1 April, prioritising herds eligible under Criterion 2.

Defra is sharing more information on the IFN gamma test with cattle keepers and this can be found on the [TB Hub](#).

5. **Using severe interpretation for trace tests.** Currently the first two Short Interval Tests (SITs) on TB breakdown holdings are read using severe interpretation, but cattle traced from these herds are normally tested using standard interpretation. To correct this inconsistency and reduce the possibility of missing infected animals, all spread tracings in England identified from 1<sup>st</sup> April will be read at severe interpretation. This measure will also apply to animals traced to holdings in England from TB breakdown herds in Wales and Scotland.

The interpretation for TR tests for traced animals identified in England from 1<sup>st</sup> of April will be set up to severe.

OVs need to be aware that if trace tested animals are included in a herd test and are submitted on the same test chart, APHA will retrospectively apply severe interpretation to the individual traced animals when the test chart is reviewed.

A proportion of animals that are inconclusive reactors (IRs) at standard interpretation will become reactors when severe interpretation is applied. If a traced animal requested by APHA to be included in a herd test (no TR test instructed for it) is disclosed as an IR, OVs should advise their clients as to whether it will become a reactor at re-interpretation.

6. **More effective control of the movement of cattle from one TB breakdown herd to another.** For business sustainability reasons APHA will sometimes licence the movement of cattle between TB breakdown herds. To reduce the risk of bTB transmission between herds, such movements generally will only be considered where the destination herd is due to have at least two SITs at severe interpretation. This measure will not apply to cattle moving from TB restricted holdings to Approved Finishing Units.

It is important to note that APHA will not instruct additional TB testing in order to accommodate movements of animals between TB restricted holdings.

This control measure will be introduced on 1 April and will apply to all new and ongoing TB breakdowns. For ongoing TB breakdown herds where the date of disclosure of the first reactor or slaughterhouse case commenced before 1 April, there will be a transition period where herd owners will be given time to adapt and implement alternative arrangements for movements of cattle whilst under TB restrictions. This will be assessed on a case by case basis and will only be considered for applications received before 1 August.

- 7. Harmonise the scheduling of SITs in TB breakdown herds.** APHA has identified an inconsistent approach in some parts of the country to the scheduling of SITs i.e. in some cases a SIT is scheduled for 60 days after the previous test, while in other cases it is 60 days after reactors at the previous test have been removed. A more consistent and rigorous approach is being introduced whereby in all cases the SIT will take place at least 60 days after removal (not detection) of reactors and this will be applied to all TB breakdown herds in England from 1 April onwards.

When IFN gamma testing is used alongside skin testing in TB breakdown herds and positive animals are identified, these animals will be taken in to account when scheduling the next SIT i.e. the next test must be scheduled for at least 60 days after all reactors (i.e. skin test and gamma test reactors) have been removed. If gamma positive animals are disclosed between SITs, they will be removed as usual and the next SIT already scheduled will stand.

APHA acknowledges that effective implementation of this measure relies on timely removal of reactors from TB breakdown herds. Reactor removal times are tightly controlled and closely monitored by APHA to ensure that as far as possible, reactors are removed within 10 working days of disclosure, however on occasion delays can happen.

- 8. Additional cattle controls.** Further cattle controls will be introduced over the course of 2017/18, with exact timing to be confirmed. These will include measures to mitigate the risks from inconclusive skin test reactors, re-defining the Edge Area boundaries to bring counties that currently straddle the High Risk and Edge Areas of England wholly into the Edge Area, and extending six-monthly testing or radial testing to all parts of the Edge Area.

Plans to expand the Edge Area will increase the number of herds subject to more rigorous cattle controls and enable faster progress towards achieving Officially TB Free (OTF) status for these counties.

## Further Information

- Detailed guidance for the new measures, including Q&A, is available on the TB Hub website: <http://www.tbhub.co.uk/tb-policy/england/enhanced-measures-tackle-bovine-tb/>
- The outcome of Defra's 2016 consultation on enhanced bovine TB surveillance and controls in the High Risk and Edge Areas of England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/bovine-tb-controls-in-the-high-risk-and-edge-areas-of-england>
- The strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free status for England: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategy-for-achieving-officially-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-for-england>
- Further guidance for private vets on private IFN gamma testing is published on the APHA Vet Gateway: <http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/vet-gateway/ifng-testing/index.htm>

**Issued:** 30 March 2017