



APHA Briefing Note 10/16

Private Cattle TB Blood Interferon-Gamma Testing - options and instructions

Purpose

1. To inform private veterinarians that APHA is now offering the option of additional private interferon-gamma (IFNG) blood TB testing of cattle from unrestricted (Officially TB free (OTF)) herds in England.

Background

2. The introduction of private IFNG testing accords with one of the objectives in Defra's current strategy for achieving Officially TB-free status for England (published April 2014). This is to facilitate access to the IFNG blood test for cattle that are currently excluded, providing additional TB test options to owners to check and monitor the health of their cattle.
3. This facility will allow private veterinarians, with prior APHA approval, to submit blood samples to the APHA laboratory at the owner's expense and in a limited number of scenarios outside of the government-funded testing programme, where owners seek additional assurances as to the TB-free status of animals over and above those afforded by statutory testing.
4. Examples include:
 - Supplementary pre- or post-movement testing of pedigree animals that are not subject to, or have passed, a compulsory skin test
 - More sensitive TB screening of animals joining high-value herds, including pedigree bulls entering semen collection centres
 - As a marketing tool to add value to herd/animals intended for sale

- Ad hoc testing following a negative routine or tracing skin test
 - Rapid retesting of inconclusive skin test reactors where no government-funded IFNG blood test is planned
5. In addition, supplementary testing of non-reactor cattle in TB breakdown herds with OTF status suspended or withdrawn may also be considered for APHA approval. For example, animals that have passed a short interval skin test and do not qualify for a government-funded IFNG test.
6. Cattle **NOT** eligible for private IFNG testing include the following:
- Cattle from herds under TB restriction and undergoing government IFNG testing
 - Skin test-positive (reactor) and other cattle awaiting slaughter for TB control purposes
 - Animals in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland at the time of testing
 - Herds under restrictions for overdue tuberculin skin tests
 - Cattle that are under six months of age.
7. Please also note that the IFNG blood test cannot be used on its own to maintain or regain OTF status for a particular cattle herd.

Test information and submitting samples

See the APHA Vet Gateway for further instructions: <http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/vet-gateway/ifng-testing/index.htm>.

Further Information

- Defra news story: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-cattle-measures-to-help-deliver-tb-freedom-in-england>
- Private Interferon Gamma Assay blood tests - Bovine TB Information Note 04/16:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/506577/tbin-0416-private-tb-testing.pdf
- APHA IFNG testing laboratory: suttbon.bovinetb@apha.gsi.gov.uk

- Defra Strategy for Officially TB-free England, 2014:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/300447/pb14088-bovine-tb-strategy-140328.pdf
- Goodchild et al., 2015, Vet. Rec., doi. 10.1136/vr.102961
- Karolemeas et al., 2012, Estimation of the relative sensitivity of the comparative tuberculin skin test in tuberculous cattle herds subjected to depopulation, PLOSone, 7(8):1-7.
- Vordermeier *et al.*, 2006, The BOVIGAM® assay as ancillary test to the tuberculin skin test. Govt. Vet. J., vol. 16(1): p72-80.

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