



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 10/24

Bovine tuberculosis – Procedural Changes to Earned Recognition and Case Management (England only)

Date issued: 21 March 2024

Purpose

1. To inform Official Veterinarians (OV) and Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATT) undertaking TB testing in England of three procedural changes regarding Earned Recognition (ER) and TB breakdown case management that APHA will apply during March 2024

Earned Recognition:

- a quarterly review of ER eligibility instead of the current six-monthly frequency will be implemented
- for herds newly obtaining ER, there will be discretion to cancel and delay the next routine test for six-months as long as the test window for the next scheduled test has not started. Currently only tests for which APHA have not sent a notification to the keeper and the Veterinary Business Partner (VDP) can be delayed.

Case Management

- Scheduling of tests following removal of gamma test positive animals disclosed between skin tests (decoupled gamma tests) will change. Currently, SITs are scheduled for 60 days after the removal of the last skin test reactor (or TT1 of a clear SIT) regardless of the disclosure and removal of any decoupled gamma test positive animals. Instead, where gamma test positive animals are removed between skin tests, the subsequent test will

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now be delayed to 60 days from removal of the last gamma test positive animal, providing this is no more than 105 days from the date of the removal of the last skin test reactor (the previous interval of 60 days plus an additional 45 days).

Background

Earned Recognition

2. Cattle herds in the High Risk Area (HRA) and six-monthly TB surveillance testing parts of the Edge Area of England are eligible for annual surveillance testing if they meet either of the following criteria:
 - I. 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
 - II. the herd is registered to a bovine TB health scheme accredited under the Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHECS) at level 1 or above
3. Currently, APHA checks eligibility under criterion I in paragraph 2 above once every six months.
4. For cattle herds that newly meet the eligibility criteria, the testing interval is amended from six-monthly to annual. The next test scheduled is delayed by six months as long as the cattle keeper and the Veterinary Delivery Partner (VDP) have not already been notified in writing of the requirement to test.
5. If the scheduled test has already been notified to the cattle keeper and the VDP, it must be completed and the subsequent test is then scheduled on an annual basis.
6. For herds eligible under criterion II in paragraph 2 above, APHA proceed as per paragraphs 4 and 5 when APHA is notified by the CHECS provider or the cattle keeper that the herd has been become CHECS accredited level 1 or above.

Case Management

7. Currently, in breakdown herds, the next skin test is scheduled for 60 days after the date of removal of the last skin reactor or direct contact (DC), or the date of the injection day (TT1) if the test did not disclose any reactors i.e. at a check test (CT) or SIT. This is regardless of the date of removal of any positive animal to a gamma interferon test undertaken in between skin tests (de-couple gamma test).

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8. If a skin test takes place less than 60 days from the date of removal of last positive animal disclosed at a de-coupled gamma test, the skin test is considered as a CT and would not qualify as one of the necessary clear tests (SITs) to lift the TB restrictions on the herd.

What's changing?

Earned Recognition

9. In March 2024, APHA will start undertaking the eligibility checks for ER on quarterly basis around beginning of March, June, September and December each year with data as of the end of the previous January, April, July and October respectively.
10. APHA will automatically reschedule any tests for which the herd keeper and the VDP have not already been notified to 12 months from the date of the last herd test. However, from 22 March 2024 and on request from the keeper of a herd becoming newly eligible for ER, if the keeper and VDP have already been notified but the test window has not yet started, APHA will also delay the next routine herd test due on the herd to 12 months from the previous herd test.

Case Management

11. From 22 March 2024, APHA will start rescheduling SITs to 60 days after the removal of the last gamma test positive animals when both of the following conditions are met:
 - the delay of a SIT scheduled for 60 days after the removal of the last skin test reactor (or TT1 of the clear previous skin test) is no more than 45 days
 - APHA has not identified any higher risk situation
12. In all cases the keeper will be informed.

Action

13. OVs and ATTs are advised to familiarise themselves with the content of this note and the updated information on the TB Hub, to which they can signpost their clients.

Further Information

14. Detailed information for cattle keepers can be found on the TB hub website <https://www.tbhub.co.uk/> which will be updated in due course.

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