



Animal &  
Plant Health  
Agency

## APHA Briefing Note 11/2023

# TB Changes in Wales: Use of Severe Interpretation in Contiguous and Post-breakdown (6M and 12M) TB Testing in specific parts of the Low and Intermediate TB Areas of Wales

Date issued: 02 March 2023

### Purpose

1. To inform Official Veterinarians (OV) and Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATT) that from 01 April 2023 severe interpretation will be used in all contiguous and post-breakdown TB skin tests in **specifically allocated spatial units or clusters in the Low and Intermediate TB Areas of Wales** (please see Annex A).
2. To also inform OVs and ATTs that on 30 January 2023 the requirement to select 'out of herd' animals with a positive bovine reaction for blood testing (Interferon-gamma ('gamma') and IDEXX antibody tests) in specific parts of the Low and Intermediate TB Areas of Wales was discontinued.

### Background

1. In 2017 the Welsh Government adopted a regionalised approach to TB eradication with the introduction of Low, Intermediate and High TB Areas. Counties in Wales are further divided in smaller areas called Spatial Units for epidemiological purposes, each of them covering several complete parishes and standardised on herd numbers.
2. This meant tailoring measures to address varying risks and disease drivers in each TB Area and allowing measures to be applied flexibly and locally to drive down levels of disease.

APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.

3. On 1 June 2021, in response to an increase in TB incidents in the Intermediate TB Area North (ITBAN) and in certain clusters in the Low TB Area (LTBA), supplementary gamma and IDEXX antibody blood testing of non-homebred cattle was introduced, as a pilot measure, in the specifically allocated spatial units or clusters in the Low and Intermediate TB Areas. Following a clear herd surveillance test, non-homebred animals with a positive reaction to bovine tuberculin were identified for TB blood testing.

## What are the Changes?

1. The following types of TB skin tests conducted in specific parts of the Low and Intermediate TB Areas of Wales with a testing window starting on or after 01 April 2023 will be read at severe interpretation:
  - contiguous tests: CON (but not CON6 and CON12)
  - post-breakdown tests: 6M and 12M
2. For those TB skin tests where this new policy applies, severe interpretation should already be pre-selected in the corresponding Sam work schedule activity (WSA).
3. This measure is aimed at increasing the likelihood of identifying and removing TB infected cattle.
4. If reactors are disclosed at severe interpretation, the Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) status of the herd will be withdrawn (OTFW) and normal breakdown procedures will apply.
5. If no reactors are found but severe and/or standard Inconclusive Reactors (IR) are disclosed, the Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) of the herd will be suspended (OTFS) and isolation of the IRs will be required. The following will then apply:
  - All severe and/or standard IRs aged six months or over will be gamma tested.
  - If no gamma positives are disclosed, the herd skin test (CON, 6M or 12M) will be reinterpreted to standard interpretation. Only animals that remain IRs at standard interpretation will be skin retested at standard interpretation at least 60 days after the disclosing test. No further action will be taken on any under six months old severe IRs.
  - If any gamma positives are disclosed or any of the standard IRs having an IR retest becomes a two-times IR or reactor, the Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) status of the herd will be withdrawn (OTFW) and normal breakdown procedures will apply.

6. For any surveillance tests in specific parts of the Low and Intermediate TB Areas of Wales with negative results completed (TT2 of the last or only part test) on or after 30 January 2023, blood testing (gamma and IDEXX antibody tests) of any 'out of herd' cattle with a positive bovine reaction will no longer be required.
7. Welsh Government is writing to all cattle keepers affected by these changes in the specifically allocated spatial units or clusters in the Low and Intermediate TB Areas of Wales.

## Action Required

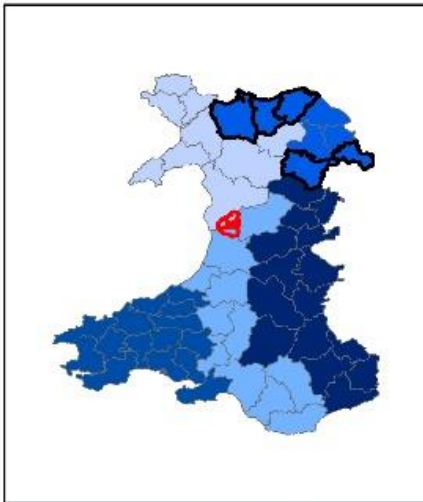
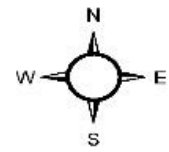
1. OV's and ATT's should familiarise themselves with the updates to the OV and ATT instructions in the APHA Vet Gateway when they are released nearer to the date of implementation on 01 April 2023.
2. If an OV or ATT finds any CON, 6M or 12M test in Wales with a testing window that starts prior to 01 April 2023 for which the test interpretation is set in the Sam WSA to severe, please confirm with APHA as soon as possible what the correct interpretation should be.

## Further Information

1. Q&A in the Welsh Government website at <https://www.gov.wales/bovine-tb-testing-rules-low-tb-area-guidance-cattle-farmers-changes-april-2023>
2. [TB Testing Intervals webpage](#) in GOV.UK, where the corresponding Spatial Unit for each parish in Wales can be checked in the parish list and the [TB Testing Interval search tool](#).
3. Please refer any queries to [Apha.CymruWales@apha.gov.uk](mailto:Apha.CymruWales@apha.gov.uk).

# Annex A

## TB Area Measures



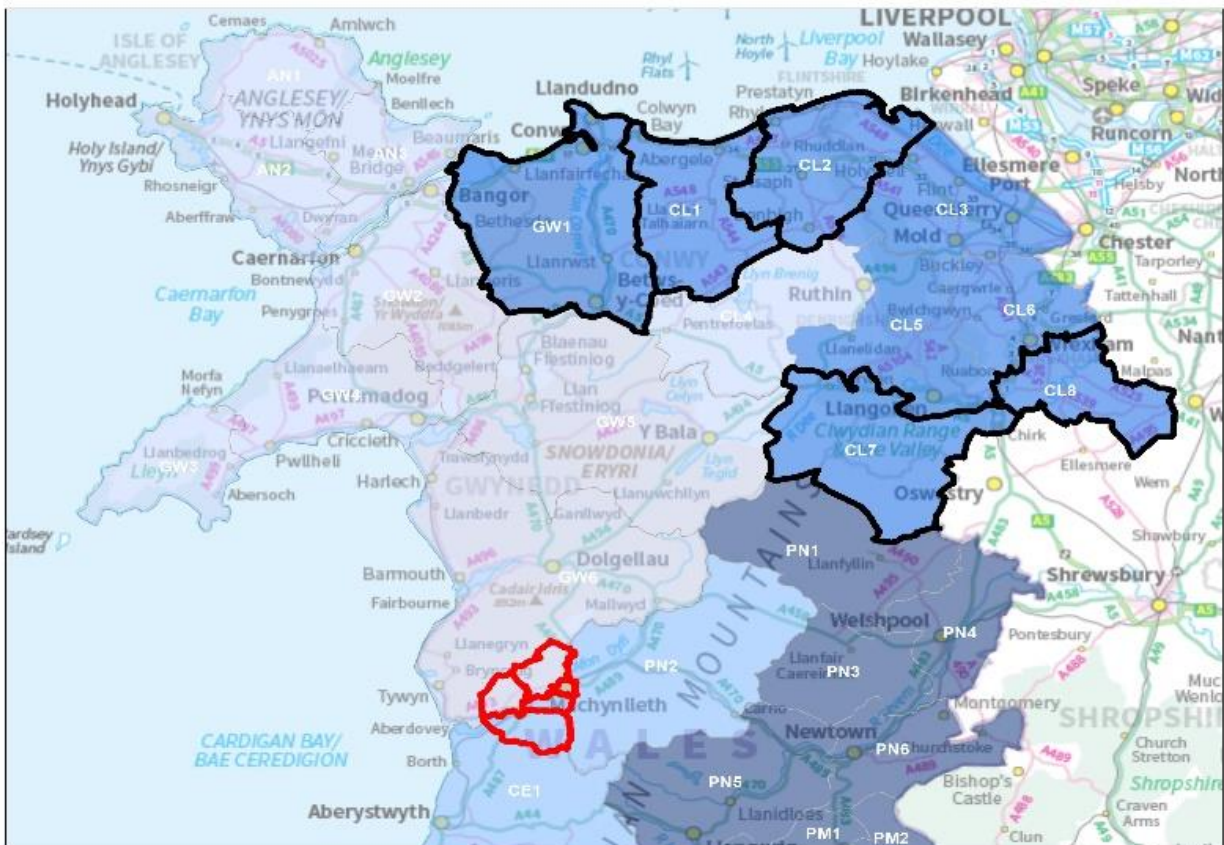
### Legend

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- Spatial\_Units\_CL1\_CL2\_CL7\_CL8\_GW1

### Wales Spatial Units

#### TB Area

- High TB Area West
- High TB Area East
- Intermediate TB Area North
- Intermediate TB Area Mid
- Low TB Area



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