



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 14/21

Introduction of the TB eradication measures in specific parts of the Low and Intermediate TB Areas of Wales.

Date issued: 18 May 2021

Purpose

To inform Official Veterinarians (OVs) in Wales that from 1st June 2021 new measures will be introduced in the Intermediate TB Area North (ITBAN), certain parts (Denbighshire/ Conwy Valley) of the Low TB Area (LTBA) and an area near Pennal covering the Low and Intermediate TB Area Mid (ITBAM) of Wales.

Background

1. In 2017 the Welsh Government adopted a regionalised approach to TB eradication with the introduction of Low, Intermediate and High TB Areas.
2. This meant tailoring measures to address varying risks and disease drivers in each TB Area, and allowing measures to be applied quickly, flexibly and locally to drive down levels of disease.
3. 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. There are 59 spatial units in Wales, each typically containing 225 herds on average, so giving a resolution between parish and county level. Each spatial unit has a name made of the two first letters of the county name and a number e.g. CL7 is Spatial Unit 7 in Clwyd.
4. In November 2020 Welsh Government wrote to all cattle keepers in the ITBAN in order to communicate to them the intention to roll out three new measures (please refer to the What's Changing section below) in the ITBAN from 1st February 2021 as a result of a continuing high level of open TB incidents. The measures were aimed at identifying

infection earlier, stopping spread within herds, and so preventing disease from becoming established.

5. Due to the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA)'s capacity, and the uncertainty around the duration of these restrictions, Welsh Government agreed to delay the roll out of those three measures until 1st of June. Cattle keepers were informed accordingly in January 2021.

6. For many years, new incidents in the LTBA have been considered mainly to be of purchased origin, with records of cattle movement from an area of higher TB incidence. Until now, the test and cull of infected cattle approach has largely dealt with these isolated incidents, preventing wider spread in the area and longer duration TB breakdowns.

7. There is now epidemiological evidence of local disease spread occurring in certain parts of the LTBA (Denbighshire/Conwy Valley) and an area around Pennal (LTBA and the ITBAM). Cattle movement links between some local breakdown herds have been identified and there is also evidence of breakdowns sharing similar or an identical genetic strain of *M. bovis*.

8. As yet, there has been no evidence of bovine TB infection in the local badger population from surveillance of dead badgers, although we do continue to monitor this situation closely. More badger carcasses for post-mortem examination can only improve our surveillance in this species and OV practices play a key role in offering storage facilities and in ensuring their clients are aware of the contact details for reporting (please see at the end of this BN).

9. The number of new breakdowns in the Denbighshire and Conwy Valley areas has more than doubled in 2020 compared to the previous year, accounting for 50% of the overall increase in the number of new incidents in the LTBA.

What's Changing

1. APHA is writing to cattle keepers in CL7 and CL8¹ of the ITBAN reminding them of the roll out of the following measures from 1st of June:

a) expansion of Individual Herd Action Plans to TB Breakdowns recurrent up to and including the 6-month test for all herds. This measure is implemented across the whole of the ITBAN.

¹ Spatial units CL7 and CL8 are in eastern Clwyd adjoining the boundary with England.

b) interferon-gamma (the gamma test) and IDEXX antibody testing as a post movement test of certain eligible animals² in two spatial units in the ITBAN (CL7 & CL8)

c) severe interpretation to TB Tests in herd breakdowns throughout the duration of a breakdown in the same spatial units (CL7 & CL8)

2. Affected cattle keepers in the Denbighshire/ Conwy Valley (spatial units GW1, CL1 and CL2 in LTBA) and in the Pennal area (LTBA and ITBAM) are also being informed that the above three measures will be applied in breakdown herds in their areas from 1st of June, and that additional measures are intended to be rolled out in Autumn 2021. Copies of the letters sent to the affected keepers in Denbighshire/Conwy Valley and in the Pennal area can be found in **Annex A** and **Annex B** respectively.

More Information

1. Map of Wales displaying the Spatial Units at **Annex C**
2. Q&A in Welsh Government website at <https://gov.wales/changes-how-we-manage-breakdowns-low-tb-area>
3. Contacts for badger carcass queries:
phone: 0808 1695110
e-mail: badger@bfd.wales
website: www.bfd.wales
4. [TB Testing Interval website](#) in GOV.UK, where the Spatial Unit for each parish in Wales can be checked in the parish list and the [TB Testing interval search tool](#).

² Non-homebred animals identified as having positive bovine reaction in a clear herd surveillance test i.e. no reactors or inconclusive reactors.

ANNEX A

To holdings within the Low TB Area (Denbigh/ Conwy Valley)

May 2021

Dear Cattle Keeper

We are writing to inform you of increasing cases of bovine TB in your area and changes necessary to prevent further spread. As you will be aware, the Low TB Area historically has been successful in keeping disease levels very low. Unfortunately, we have identified emerging hotspots within the area which need to be addressed quickly.

Background

You will know you are currently in an area designated as part of the Low TB Area, because of the long-term low levels of new TB incidents there. For many years, new incidents in the Low TB Area have been considered mainly to be of purchased origin, with records of cattle movement from an area of higher TB incidence. Until now, the test and cull of infected cattle approach has largely dealt with these isolated incidents, preventing wider spread in the area and longer duration TB breakdowns.

There is now epidemiological evidence of local disease spread occurring in your area. Cattle movement links between some local breakdown herds have been identified. There is also evidence of breakdowns sharing similar or an identical genetic strain of *Mycobacterium Bovis* (*M. bovis*), the bovine TB bacteria.

As yet, there has been no evidence of bovine TB infection in the local badger population from surveillance of dead badgers, although we do continue to monitor this situation closely.

If you find a dead badger, please report as follows;

phone: 0808 1695110

e-mail: badger@bfd.wales

website: www.bfd.wales

Why are we taking action?

The number of new breakdowns in the Denbigh and Conwy areas has more than doubled in 2020 compared to the previous year, accounting for 50% of the overall increase in the number of new incidents in the Low TB Area. Unless action is taken now, the situation is likely to worsen, with disease spreading wider and more businesses being subject to TB movement restrictions.

How will this affect you?

In response to these spikes in infection and to protect the long-term health status of the Low TB Area, a number of new measures are to be introduced in a phased approach between 1 June and Autumn 2021. Further updates will be produced in due course. A summary of the main points is as follows:

Additional contiguous testing requirements for herds neighbouring a breakdown and increased test sensitivity in order to identify spread of infection earlier.

This means if your neighbour has a TB breakdown, more regular testing of your herd will be needed at an increased sensitivity i.e. severe interpretation of the TB test. Increased test sensitivity will also be introduced into post-breakdown tests at 6 months and a further 12 months, following a breakdown.

Introducing Pre-Movement Testing to prevent spread of infection locally by temporarily increasing the TB status of your area from “Low” to “Intermediate” (see Figure 1). This will require cattle to have had a clear TB test within 60 days of a movement.

Due to the change of the TB status of your area, Post-Movement Private Skin Testing will not be mandatory anymore. However, it will be replaced with **additional blood testing** by APHA of animals purchased into the herd that have shown a positive reaction to bovine tuberculin in a clear surveillance skin test.

4. **Testing at severe interpretation** if you are in a TB breakdown. Also, higher risk animals, i.e. Inconclusive Reactors (IRs) to the skin test, will receive additional blood testing. This will increase the likelihood of identifying all infected animals in a TB incident and reduce the likelihood of TB infected animals remaining in a herd when the incident ends.

5. **In recurrent breakdown herds an Action Plan will be implemented** in consultation with your veterinary surgeon and APHA case vet for a step by step approach to help control and eradicate bovine TB from your herd.

6. **Additional veterinary assessment and advice** from APHA at the beginning of a breakdown to help you introduce measures that are likely to reduce the likelihood of spreading TB infection within your herd.

7. **Government funded biosecurity visits** (Cymorth “Keep It Out”) from your own vet to help you prevent the introduction of bovine TB into your herd if you are contiguous (neighbour) to a breakdown.

Further information on each of the measures and what these changes mean for you can be found in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document within the

Low TB Area section of the Welsh Government's Bovine TB webpages
<https://gov.wales/bovine-tb>

Which areas of the Low TB Area will be affected by these changes?

The measures will affect the following areas highlighted in dark grey :

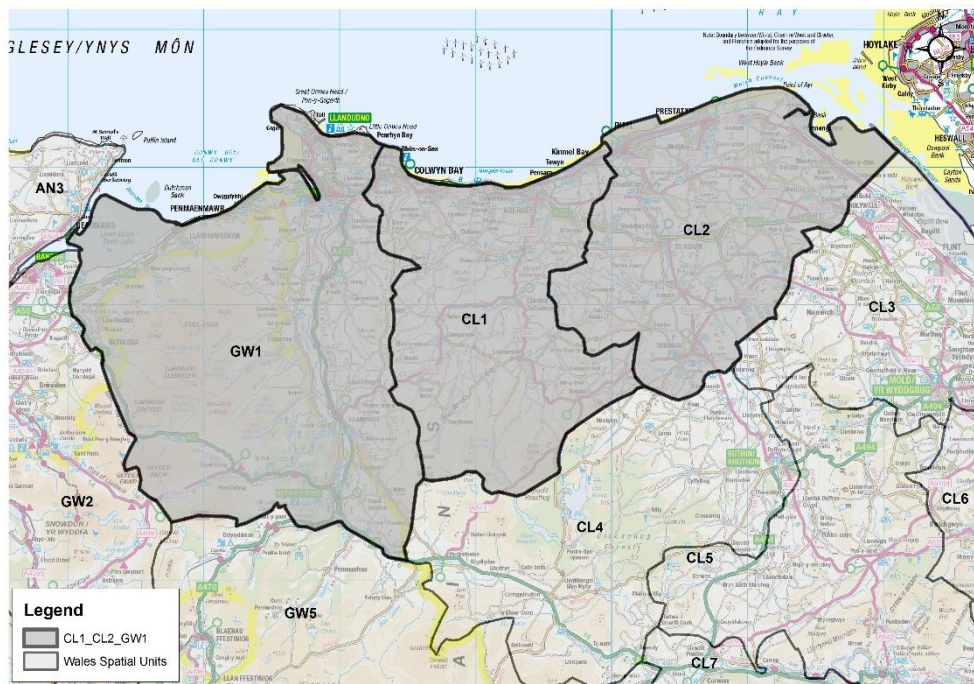


Figure1 – the Denbigh cluster and Conwy Valley affected spatial units

How long will these measures be in place?

The impact of the implementation of these measures will be reviewed regularly and will be amended based on epidemiological evidence and advice.

What support is available?

We appreciate the temporary implementation of these measures may cause some uncertainty and concern for you, your family and your business. We would like to assure you there is support available:

- Contact details for APHA: **0300 303 8268**
- Maintain dialogue with your vet who will be able to advise and provide support on the introduction of these measures.
- Farm Liaison Service <https://gov.wales/farm-liaison-service>
- FarmWell <https://farmwell.wales/get-support/>
- Please see Frequently Asked Questions Document on the bovine TB section of the Welsh Government webpages: <https://gov.wales/bovine-tb>

We appreciate there is a lot of change being imposed, however we are determined to get on top of the disease situation in the Low TB Area to ensure it stays on track to meet its target of being declared Officially TB Free in the not so distant future.

Please be mindful of your purchasing behaviours, making informed decisions about where you source your animals from - www.ibtb.co.uk can be used for this purpose.

Similar measures have been adopted in the Intermediate TB Area where there is an ongoing initiative in place to address a spike in disease incidence.

We ask for your full cooperation in managing disease out of this area working with your private veterinarian and APHA to do so.

Yours Sincerely

Christianne Glossep

Chief Veterinary Officer, Wales
Welsh Government

ANNEX B

May 2021

Dear Cattle Keeper

We are writing to inform you of increasing cases of bovine TB in your area and changes necessary to prevent further spread. Unfortunately, we have identified emerging disease hotspots within the Low TB Area which need to be addressed quickly, this includes a cluster of holdings in and around Pennal.

Background

You will know you are currently in an area designated as part of the Low TB Area, because of the long-term low levels of new TB incidents there. For many years, new incidents in the Low TB Area have been considered mainly to be of purchased origin, with records of cattle movement from an area of higher TB incidence. Until now, the test and cull of infected cattle approach has largely dealt with these isolated incidents, preventing wider spread in the area and longer duration TB breakdowns.

There is now epidemiological evidence of local disease spread occurring in your area. There is evidence of breakdowns sharing similar or an identical genetic strain of *Mycobacterium bovis* (*M. bovis*), the bovine TB bacteria, suggesting more local links between these breakdowns.

As yet, there has been no evidence of bovine TB infection in the local badger population from surveillance of dead badgers, although we do continue to monitor this situation closely.

If you find a dead badger, please report as follows;

phone: 0808 1695110

e-mail: badger@bfd.wales

website: www.bfd.wales

Why are we taking action?

The reason we are taking these actions is because of the relatively recent confirmation of local spread of bovine TB in the Pennal area and concerns that if action is not taken now it may soon resemble another emerging hotspot of disease in the Denbigh and Conwy Valley areas, which appears to be more established. If the situation remains unaddressed it is likely to worsen over time, with disease spreading wider and more businesses being subject to TB movement restrictions.

How will this affect you?

In response to these observations and to protect the long-term health status of your area and the Low TB Area, as a whole, a number of new measures are to be introduced in your area in a phased approach from 1 June and Autumn 2021. Further updates will be produced in due course. A summary of the main points is as follows:

(Note you will receive further communication prior to the introduction of measures 4 - 10 and their requirements as they will be implemented).

Measures to be introduced in June 2021

Measure 1: Introduce testing at severe interpretation from the beginning of a TB breakdown, with an exit strategy of using additional blood testing on animals with a severe inconclusive reactor (IR) status, when a herd test has only identified severe IRs. Two clear tests will be needed to lift TB restrictions.

Aim: To increase the likelihood of identifying infected animals at an earlier stage and reduce the likelihood of infected animals remaining in the herd at the end of the breakdown

Measure 2: In the event of a clear surveillance test (e.g. an annual Whole Herd Test in your herd), animals which have shown a positive reaction to bovine tuberculin and have an out-of-herd ear tag number will be identified subsequently for additional blood testing by APHA. In the event of a positive test result your herd will be placed under TB movement restrictions and one clear herd test will be needed at standard interpretation to lift the restrictions.

Aim: To identify infected purchased animals at an earlier stage by using more sensitive additional testing.

Measure 3: In herds with a recurrent breakdown within 6 months of the closure of a previous breakdown, that is not considered to be purchased in origin, an Action Plan will be implemented by an APHA case vet for a step by step approach to help control and eradicate bovine TB from your herd. Your private vet (at your expense) can be involved in the meeting with APHA if you so choose.

Aim: Breakdowns occurring soon after the closure of a herd breakdown can be an indication that disease is becoming established in the herd, or that the herd can tighten up its TB controls to ensure added protection against the introduction of new disease

Measures to be introduced in Autumn 2021

Measure 4: IRs will be targeted in all breakdowns with additional blood testing

Aim: To ensure additional higher sensitivity testing is carried out on these high risk animals

Measures 5 and 6: Introduce additional 6 monthly testing into herds neighbouring a breakdown (contiguous) and change the interpretation of testing to severe for all contiguous tests (CON/CON6/CON12) and post-incident tests (6M/12M). The testing regime for a contiguous herd will now include an immediate CON test, a CON6 test 6 months later, a further CON6 test 6 months after that and a final CON12 test 12 months later.

Aim: To increase the likelihood of identifying infected animals in these higher risk herds

Measure 7: Introduce an extended biosecurity advisory element to the APHA Disease Report Form (DRF) visit,

Aim: To identify potential weaknesses that the keeper can address to tighten up TB controls in the herd. These may range from not feeding raw milk to calves, to improving boundary fencing, to protecting feed stores and water sources against wildlife access

Measure 8: Introduce Government funded biosecurity visits (Cymorth “Keep It Out”) from your own vet to help you prevent the introduction of bovine TB into your herd if you are contiguous (a neighbour) to a breakdown.

Aim: To reduce the likelihood of a new TB breakdowns in a herd neighbouring a TB breakdown, by ensuring the keeper is clear about practical measures they can use.

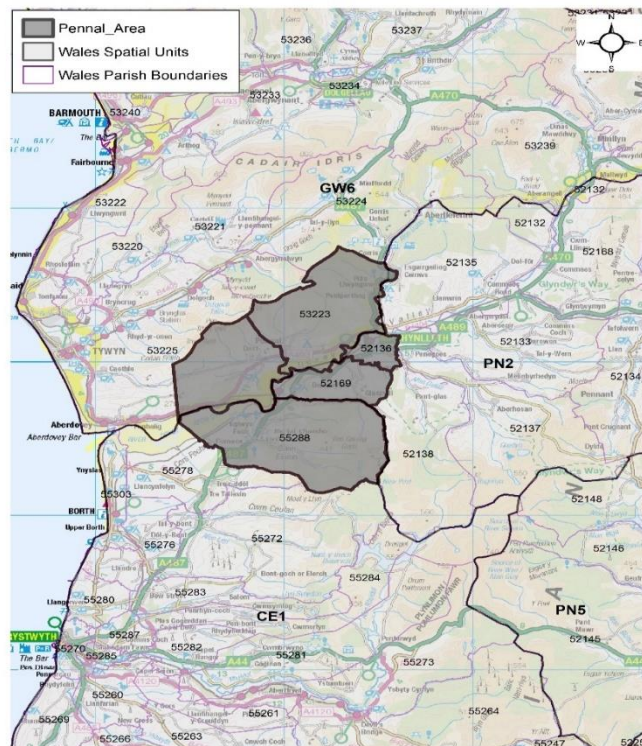
Measure 9: All herds in a TB breakdown will require a least two clear tests before release of TB restrictions, unless the breakdown is started by a positive post-movement blood test (as above), or is as a result of a slaughterhouse case, pending culture results.

Aim: To increase the likelihood of identifying TB infected animals in the herd, before restrictions are lifted.

Measure 10: No herds with an IR only test result at another wise clear surveillance test, will have their herd restrictions lifted pending the result of the retest of the restricted IR. Currently this can occur if the herd has had no confirmed TB breakdowns in the last three years.

Aim: To ensure that restrictions aren't lifted too early in the event of an IR retesting positive, leading to increased spread of disease from animals moved during the period before the retest.

What is the extent of the area around Pennal that will be affected by these changes? The measures will affect the following areas highlighted in dark grey:



How long will these measures be in place?

The impact of the implementation of these measures will be reviewed regularly and will be amended based on epidemiological evidence and advice.

What support is available?

We appreciate the temporary implementation of these measures may cause some uncertainty and concern for you, your family and your business. We would like to assure you there is support available:

- Contact details for APHA: **0300 303 8268**
- Maintain dialogue with your vet who will be able to advise and provide support on the introduction of these measures.
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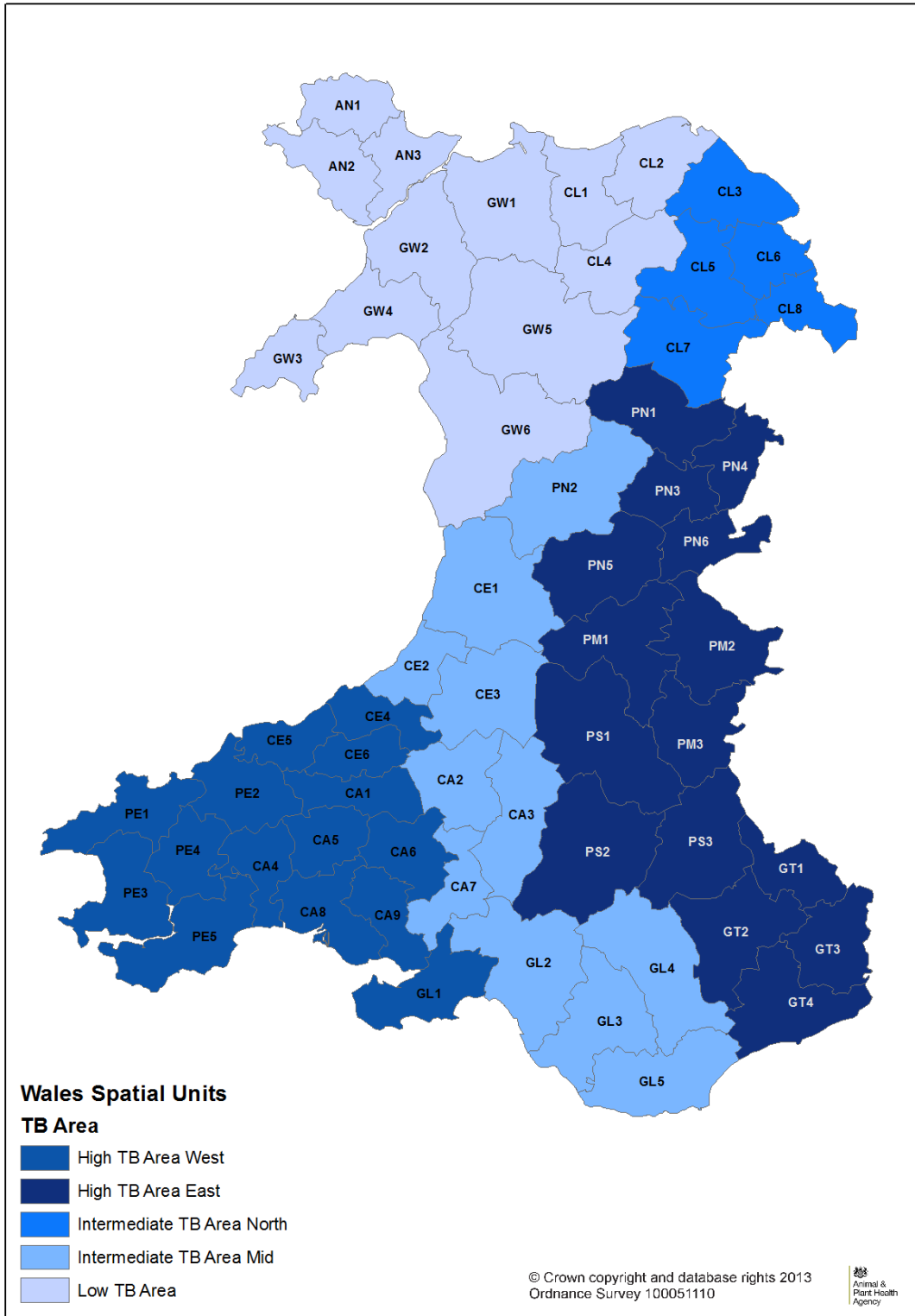
Similar measures have been adopted in the Denbigh/ Conwy Valley and Intermediate TB Area where there is an ongoing initiative in place to address area emerging, or more established disease issues.

We ask for your full cooperation in managing disease out of this area working with your private veterinarian and APHA to do so.

Christianne Glossep

Chief Veterinary Officer, Wales
Welsh Government

ANNEX C



Map of Wales displaying Spatial Units

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.