



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

APHA Briefing Note 23/21

Quality assurance pilot for tuberculin skin testing in England and Wales

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Purpose

1. To inform Official Veterinarians (OVs) about the introduction of a pilot in England and Wales to enhance the existing Quality Assurance (QA) programme for tuberculin skin testing in Great Britain (GB).

Background

2. TB testing of cattle herds is instrumental in bovine TB eradication programmes in England and Wales and maintaining Scotland's officially TB free (OTF) status. It is vital that the single intradermal comparative cervical tuberculin test (SICCT), the internationally accepted standard and primary diagnostic test for TB in cattle in GB, is performed carefully and accurately to identify TB-infected cattle.
3. In England and Wales, statutory TB skin testing is carried out by Delivery Partner (DP) OVs and in England also by a small number of independent OV practices. In Scotland this work is delivered directly through OV practices. Additionally, in England, non-veterinary Approved Tuberculin Testers (ATTs) carry out skin testing.

Quality assurance programme

4. The APHA, quality assures delivery of TB skin testing across GB including through a combination of routine and targeted audits for individual TB testers. Audits are targeted based on intelligence and/or data that raises concerns about a tester's TB testing performance. Both routine and targeted audits will continue.
5. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for conducting the tuberculin skin test is available for OVs and ATTs on the APHA Vet Gateway. All field audits, whether conducted by the Delivery Partners or APHA, are carried out in accordance with Tuberculin Skin Test Audit – Minimum Requirements (TR586), also available on the

APHA Vet Gateway. This document includes actions taken when non-compliance is identified.

APHA pilot

6. To further enhance the existing field audit programme of TB skin testing, APHA is conducting a six-month pilot in England and Wales from 1st June 2021 to assess the use of data to better inform selection of individual OV TB testers for further investigation.
7. The pilot will be based on data analysed by APHA and used to create reports detailing individual TB testers results in terms of the number of reactors, inconclusive reactors and skin reactions, considering TB test type and county. The reports will be used to identify individuals, known as 'outliers', whose TB testing outputs fall considerably outside those of most OVs.
8. The APHA recognises that there may be good reason why an individual is an outlier but use of this methodology will provide an additional QA tool. The data will be used alongside any other available intelligence.
9. Further information on the process for selection of outliers used by APHA can be found in an article published in Improve International's [Veterinary Practice](#) magazine.
10. The pilot will inform refinements to the methodology for selecting outliers as part of APHA's continuous improvement process.

Further Information

- OV instructions on Skin Testing:
http://apha.defra.gov.uk/External_OV_Instructions/TB_Instructions/Skin_Test/index.htm
- Tuberculin Skin Test Audit - Minimum Requirements:
<http://apha.defra.gov.uk/external-operations-admin/library/documents/tuberculosis/TR586.pdf>
- Contact details for relevant APHA team: TBTesterMonitoring@apha.gov.uk.