



(Insert Recipients Name and Address)

00 Month 20XX

Dear Recipient,

Permission to Test Camelids for Tuberculosis

Following *laboratory confirmation/suspicion in your herd of tuberculosis (TB) caused by *Mycobacterium bovis* (*M. bovis*, the bacterium that causes bovine TB), all/some* camelids on your premises have been placed under movement restrictions.

You will be aware of the public and animal health risks associated with this infectious disease and the need to control its spread. Therefore, it is important that the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) carry out the necessary testing and also investigate any previous movements of susceptible animals both on to and off your premises.

TB is often a chronic infection and it may take a long time for infected animals to develop signs of disease detectable by clinical or post-mortem examination. Even when present, clinical signs of TB are not always typical of, or specific to, this disease. Therefore, to establish the extent of infection in a herd, we need to use tests that measure an immune response against the bacterium. With your permission, we would like to arrange for the necessary tests to be carried out at the government's expense. Before doing so, we ask you to consent to the terms of the attached agreement, which includes provision for the payment to you of £750 for any TB affected animal that is removed for slaughter.

We shall use the comparative intradermal tuberculin test ('skin test') to screen your animal(s) for TB infection. As you may be aware, this test is the official TB screening method for camelids that are traded internationally. It is also the only diagnostic test for TB currently recognised for use in live camelids in most countries. The number of skin tests with negative results that your animals will have to undergo before the restrictions can be lifted depends on the degree of suspicion of infection attached to your herd. If *M. bovis* infection is only suspected, or your animals have been identified as tracings from an infected herd, one skin test with negative results will be sufficient to lift the movement restrictions. By contrast, if the bacterium has been identified in other animals in your herd, we shall require two consecutive skin tests with negative results (completed at a minimum interval of 90 days from the removal of the last infected animal) before your herd may be considered TB free.

No screening test for TB has been fully validated in sufficient numbers of camelids of known *M. bovis* infection status. It is acknowledged that ante-mortem TB testing in camelids, including the skin test, is not perfectly accurate and that the skin test may fail to detect all infected animals in a herd. Therefore, if colonies of the causative bacterium are isolated from tissue cultures in the laboratory, we may additionally offer you the possibility of supplementing the skin test with the more sensitive blood tests carried out by the APHA TB research group. These are known as the Chembio STAT-PAK rapid antibody test and the camelid-specific interferon-gamma test.

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.

Both blood tests are undergoing validation at APHA and have already been used in several infected camelid herds in Great Britain with promising results, in that they often detect visibly infected animals that were missed by the skin test. Therefore, if run in conjunction with the skin test, they can speed up the resolution of a TB breakdown and reduce the risk of leaving undisclosed infected animals in the herd after the restrictions have been lifted. The blood tests may also identify infected animals without any typical lesions of TB detected at post-mortem examination. However, such animals must not be regarded as 'false positives' since they may well have been tested at the early stages of infection, before visible lesions of TB are fully developed in the affected organs.

If you agree to supplement the skin test with the blood tests, we will, as a minimum, take blood samples for the Chembio STAT-PAK rapid test (this will ideally take place 10-30 days after a skin test). Additionally, we would like to take another set of samples for the camelid interferon-gamma test from all the animals over six months of age.

TB screening tests are laborious and expensive. Also, being able to access post-mortem results of test-positive animals will advance our understanding of the performance characteristics of these tests in British camelid herds. We will, therefore, expect you to release to us, for slaughter and post-mortem examination at the government's expense, *all* animals that may be identified as reactors by *any* of the tests applied in your herd.

Please also note that APHA may not undertake any TB screening tests (and reserves the right to suspend an ongoing TB testing programme at any time) if:

- (i) it comes to our attention that any animals in your herd have received treatment for TB. In these circumstances, movement restrictions may also be maintained on the treated animals or
- (ii) any animals that were part of a TB-restricted herd are unaccounted for without a veterinary diagnosis or post-mortem report.

Any animals exhibiting clinical signs consistent with TB should be immediately reported to your veterinary surgeon. If *M. bovis*-infected camelids have previously been identified on your premises, an APHA Veterinary Officer will assess if clinically suspect animals qualify for removal as 'direct contacts'.

If you wish us to proceed with the TB test(s) on the terms set out in this letter, please sign the agreement on the following page, indicating whether you wish us to carry out the skin test alone or in conjunction with the blood test(s), and return it to this office.

You may wish to discuss your options with your private veterinary surgeon and with the Camelid TB Support Group on 01209 822422, 07949511316 (www.alpacatb.org).

In the meantime, may we remind you of the continuing statutory obligation to notify this office of any suspect signs of TB that you or your veterinary surgeon may encounter in the course of post-mortem examination of any dead animals in your ownership.

Yours sincerely,

Name

Veterinary Lead Scotland

Agreement for the management of TB breakdowns on camelid premises

APHA will:

1. At its own expense carry out ante-mortem TB testing of your animals using the skin test and, should you give permission (and subject to availability at the laboratory), the blood test(s).
2. Remove for slaughter and post-mortem examination any animals that:
 - a. are considered reactors to either the TB skin or blood tests or
 - b. are untested (or test-negative animals) but, in the opinion of an APHA veterinary surgeon are deemed direct contacts or suspect clinical cases of TB.
3. Pay £750 for each animal removed by APHA for TB control purposes. However, no payment will be made for untested or test-negative animals that die or are euthanased by the owner before they can be evaluated by an APHA veterinary surgeon, even if infection with *M. bovis* is established on post-mortem examination. Likewise, no compensation is payable for any test reactor animals that die on farm while awaiting slaughter.
4. Expect owners to be able to account fully for all the animals in their herd and particularly any that are missing from the herd since it was previously tested.
5. Cease ante-mortem TB testing if, at any time, the owner fails to comply with the terms of this agreement.

You (the owner/keeper) will:

1. Allow APHA veterinary surgeons to have access to all premises necessary to complete the relevant tests (skin test alone/skin and rapid blood test/skin, rapid and gamma-interferon blood tests *).
2. Allow APHA to remove for slaughter and post-mortem examination as soon as practicable all animals which:
 - a. are considered reactors to either the TB skin or blood test(s) or
 - b. in the opinion of an APHA veterinary surgeon, are direct contacts or suspect clinical cases of TB.
3. Repay the costs of all testing carried out on your animals to APHA if you refuse to have animals removed for slaughter and post-mortem examination in accordance with this agreement.
4. Immediately notify APHA of any camelids that die or have to be put down on farm, so that a post-mortem examination can be arranged.
5. Refrain from treating camelids for TB, therapeutically or prophylactically (e.g. by administration of any drugs or vaccines that may have been licensed for use in other species).

I, consent to my whole herd/certain animals identified by APHA* undergoing TB testing with the skin test alone/skin and blood test(s)* at the government's expense on the terms set out above.

Signed

Date

**Delete as applicable*

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