



## Approach to Setting Routine Surveillance TB Testing Intervals in 2021 Policy Document for England

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### Principles that apply to calculate routine herd testing frequency in England in 2021 (updated May 2021)

1. Routine surveillance TB testing intervals are based on the regional level of bovine TB risk.
2. Default routine surveillance testing frequencies are generally applied to whole counties, except in the Edge Area counties of Derbyshire, Hampshire and Berkshire where there is annual and six-monthly testing in different parts of the counties. Parishes are only used to ensure tests are evenly distributed throughout the four years of the TB testing cycle in the four-yearly testing area (refer to 'temporal smoothing' below).
3. The following whole counties in the South West and West Midlands of England represent the High Risk Area (HRA): Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, West Midlands, Staffordshire, and Shropshire.
4. From 1 July 2021 default six-monthly surveillance testing will apply to cattle herds in the HRA of England<sup>1</sup>. Refer to the TB Hub website for more details on this policy change:  
<https://tbhub.co.uk/tb-policy/england/six-monthly-surveillance-testing-of-cattle-herds-in-the-high-risk-area/>.
5. Some cattle herds will be eligible to remain on annual surveillance testing if they meet either of the following criteria:
  - the herd has been in existence for at least six years and has not had a TB breakdown in that six year period (including breakdowns where no lesion and/or culture positive animals were disclosed). A single break from keeping cattle of less than four months during the six year period is permitted
  - the herd is registered to a bovine TB health scheme licensed by CHECS and accredited at level 1 or above
6. Counties which are at risk of geographic spread of bovine TB in the short to medium term are placed on annual or six-monthly surveillance testing and constitute the TB Edge Area of England:
  - **Six-monthly testing** in the whole of Cheshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and parts<sup>2</sup> of Derbyshire (West), Berkshire (West) and Hampshire (North West). Some cattle herds in these parts of the Edge Area are eligible for annual surveillance testing if they meet **either** criteria specified in paragraph 5 above
  - **annual testing** in all other parts of the Edge Area (i.e. Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex and remaining parts<sup>2</sup> of Derbyshire, Berkshire and Hampshire) supplemented with radial testing around lesion and/or culture positive TB breakdowns. This radial testing consists of an immediate herd test followed by another herd test six months later. If these radial tests are completed with negative results, the herd goes back to its default annual testing frequency
7. The objective of this enhanced surveillance testing is to speed up the detection of infected herds in this area of increasing incidence.
8. The rest of the North and East of England (Low Risk Area (LRA)), where the incidence and risk of TB has historically been very low and there is no evidence of a wildlife reservoir of TB, remain on background four-yearly routine testing. The LRA covers the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, County Durham, Cumbria, Essex, Greater London, Greater Manchester, Hertfordshire, Humberside, Isle of Wight, Isles of Scilly, Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Norfolk, Northumberland, North, South and West Yorkshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Tyne and Wear and West Sussex.

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<sup>1</sup> Six-monthly testing was introduced initially in the counties of Staffordshire and Shropshire only in September 2020.

<sup>2</sup> The list of parishes on six-monthly and annual testing in the counties of Derbyshire, Berkshire and Hampshire can be found on the 2021 Testing Intervals site on GOV.UK.

9. Defra has demonstrated that the majority of lesion and/or culture positive TB breakdowns in four-yearly tested areas can be attributed directly to movements of undetected infected cattle from the endemic TB areas in England and Wales without further consequences for other cattle herds in the locality. No geographical changes to the LRA will occur in 2021.
10. However any individual herds in the four-yearly testing LRA that are considered to be at a higher risk of TB infection (because of management practices or recent disease history) are placed on annual or more frequent testing. This includes:
  - herds at risk because of management practices. This affects herds such as bull hirers, producer retailers of raw milk, and herds with high risk trading practices
  - breakdown herds, or herds that have regained Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) status but still require a post-breakdown testing regime
  - herds that fall within (or straddle) a 3km radius circle from an lesion and/or culture positive TB breakdown, or are considered to be epidemiologically relevant to that breakdown, are subject to an immediate herd test of all the cattle on the premises aged 42 days and older. This is followed by additional check tests at six and 12 months. If this enhanced surveillance fails to detect further evidence of infection in the vicinity of an lesion or culture positive TB breakdown, the herds revert to background four-yearly testing
  - APHA also retains the discretion to shorten herd testing intervals in response to changes in the local disease situation e.g. herds in the East Cumbria TB hotspot placed on six-monthly testing
11. To optimise the effectiveness of TB surveillance in lower incidence areas, the routine testing of herds in the four-yearly testing area is organised so as to ensure that an equal proportion of herds in a parish undergo routine TB testing each year of the cycle. This 'temporal smoothing' ensures that routine herd tests are distributed equally across the parish over time, thus increasing the probability of detecting infection in the area as early as possible.
12. Mandatory gamma interferon blood testing continues to apply in all new lesion and/or culture positive TB breakdowns in the LRA and Edge Areas.
13. All keepers of cattle herds on an annual or more frequent testing interval must also comply with statutory pre-movement testing requirements, unless an exemption applies to the animal being moved or the type of movement. This includes herds in the LRA that are tested more frequently than the default four-yearly interval as in paragraph 10 above.
14. Compulsory post-movement testing of cattle entering the LRA of England from annual or more frequent TB testing areas of GB came into force on 6 April 2016 (a small number of exemptions apply). The aim of the post-movement testing policy is to further reduce the risk of introducing TB infected cattle into the LRA.
15. For the whole of England, forward and backward tracing tests are required on animals from lesion and/or culture-positive TB breakdowns.

**TB Programme Defra  
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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.