

Testing for bovine TB extended in Eden

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TESTING for bovine tuberculosis has been extended following the outbreak at an Eden farm in April.

The Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) said it was conducting "enhanced measures" to reduce the risk of the virus spreading.

Some 23 farms within a three kilometre radius of Plumpton Head Farm, near Penrith, are being examined after 103 infected cattle from a milking herd had to be destroyed.

However, tests carried out immediately following the confirmation of TB revealed it had not spread to neighbouring premises.

Any dead wildlife found within the zone, such as badgers and deer, will also be tested.

The skin testing is standard practice when an outbreak is confirmed in areas where TB has not been common.

Gonzalo Sanchez-Cabezudo, AHVLA's regional veterinary lead, said: "All cattle herds within a three kilometre radius of the premises where TB was first detected will undergo testing for the disease.

"This goes beyond the normal contiguous testing where only premises neighbouring the affected premises are tested.

"Enhanced wildlife surveillance will also take place over an area larger than the three kilometre testing area."

Secondary tests will be carried out in 12 months and farmers will be kept updated on the process by the AHVLA.

The North West NFU is urging farmers in Cumbria to "rise to the challenge" and stop the disease spreading.

Regional director, Robert Sheasby, said: "This will be a worrying time for local livestock farmers as we have fought long and hard to keep this devastating disease at bay.

"Our aim now must be to see it contained and we will be working closely with AHVLA and our members locally to ensure everything possible is done to prevent it spreading."

Robert Craig, Cumbria county chairman for the NFU, said it was frustrating it had taken two months to introduce tests.

He said he understood a similar strain to that found at Plumpton Head had been discovered elsewhere in the UK but no link identified.

"It may have come to Cumbria via an animal passing through the area," he said. "I am sure it's a real nuisance for the farms affected but we have to be sure that there are no more cases."

As yet, the investigation into the Penrith outbreak has not been unable to identify the cause.

Bovine tuberculosis is caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium bovis* which can also infect and cause TB in badgers, deer, goats, pigs, camelids (llamas and alpacas), dogs and cats and other mammals.

It can be transmitted to people, however, the risk of people contracting TB from cattle is very low.