

Bovine TB eradication | Farming Futures

Summary

TB Eradication demands a clear understanding of the disease, structure of the industry and the sociological issues. All parties must know their roles and work together. An eradication programme needs financial and political stability. Adherence to testing protocols and movement restrictions is essential. A strong communication plan with targeted key messages is needed for the public, farmers, vets and government officials. Developments in research and testing may help in the future but cannot be relied on - action has to be taken with the tools that are currently available. Research needs to be more inclusive of stakeholders. An eradication programme has to evolve and develop different regional and national policies as it reduces the level of disease. Cattle movements and wildlife can have a big effect on success or failure.

The objective of the study tour was to investigate various TB eradication programmes across Europe and to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to tackling the disease. Countries visited Ireland, Northern Ireland, Switzerland, Italy, Belgium (Brussels), Sweden, France, Wales, England and Spain.

Introduction

Bovine TB (bTB) is an invisible disease that impacts on individuals, families and communities. Over the years I've been working with bovine TB I have personally seen the devastation that this disease causes on farming businesses, livestock, the environment, people and communities. It is a zoonosis which means it can also affect humans.

My journey started before my Nuffield Farming Scholarship when I became Head of Bovine TB policy at the Welsh Government and worked with the Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Christianne Glossop and the team to develop the Welsh Bovine TB Eradication Programme back in 2007. During my time at the Welsh Government I experienced highs and lows dealing with the disease, but also had some positive results in reducing the level of bovine TB in Wales. I met some fantastic farmers and veterinarians and their stories, heartbreaks and frustrations have stayed with me and is one of the main reasons I decided to undertake this Nuffield Farming Scholarship.

I'm 43 years old and have lived since 2000 on a beef and sheep farm outside Talgarth in Powys. I left the Welsh Government to work on the farm and develop my family educational publishing business producing books, games, websites and apps. In 2012 I became a partner in the farm through the Welsh Government Young Entrant Scheme. I continue to be involved with bovine TB as Chair of the South East Wales TB Eradication Board where we look at the disease in our region and look at ways we could help improve things. For example, we have an ongoing project in the Gower where members are still working with cattle farmers on the peninsula to implement different action plans. Recently, we were successful in applying for funding from the Welsh Government to complete a farmer-led badger survey on the Gower.

Conclusions

- Bovine TB Eradication is difficult but eradication has been achieved in other EU countries by working together and using all available tools.
- A successful programme needs political and financial stability to succeed. The programme governance needs to ensure that these elements are key features of the programme.
- The nature of disease, the farming structure and the social background is very different between and within other EU countries. It is essential that policy makers understand these differences and involve all stakeholders in developing and delivering an eradication programme.
- EU legislation needs to be reviewed and revised to reflect social and scientific changes and the experience of all EU countries in implementing an eradication programme. Following Brexit there is an opportunity to review and amend UK legislation. However, EU legislation will still govern international trade.
- Carrying out epidemiological analysis and acting on that information is an integral part of the continuous improvement of an eradication programme.
- Research has an integral role to play but this research must be targeted for the greatest impact and to be more inclusive of all stakeholders.
- Communication methods need to be targeted and reflect those aspects that are important to different stakeholders.
- Training and education has an important role to play but this must be engaging and available through contemporary communication media (e.g. mobile apps).
- Farming businesses need to ensure that animal health is an integral part of their business development and planning. As we compete within a global market having clean and healthy livestock will become a very important marketing tool.

Recommendations

1. Industry and government should look at developing a delivery model that can ensure the involvement of all stakeholders within a financially and politically stable framework.
2. The development of data sharing and the use of technology is important to help understand some underlying issues, to improve training and to deliver education and delivery efficiencies.
3. If eradication is the goal, then all currently available techniques should be used, rather than policies based on what may be available in the future.

4. There needs to be a communication strategy that is based on the understanding of the target audience
5. Involve all stakeholders in the research decision making process, and ensure that these decisions are accessible and understood by all.
6. Implement Compliance and Quality Control Protocols that ensure effective and consistent delivery.
7. As an industry we need to take actions to control and eradicate disease such as BVD and Johnes

[Summary of Dafydd Saunders-Jones' Nuffield Farming Scholarships Trust Report, "Bovine TB eradication programmes in Europe."](#)