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Press release

Bovine TB strategy launched to make England disease free within 25 years

From: Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs>) and The Rt Hon Owen Paterson (<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/owen-paterson>)

Part of: Bovine tuberculosis (bovine TB) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/bovine-tuberculosis-bovine-tb>)

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A plan to rid England of bovine TB within 25 years has been set out today by Environment Secretary Owen Paterson.



The strategy sets out action in areas such as disease surveillance, pre- and post-movement cattle testing, removal of cattle exposed to bTB, tracing the potential source of infection and wildlife controls including culling and vaccination trials.

It also focuses on the development of new techniques such as badger and cattle vaccines and new diagnostic tests that could one day offer new ways of tackling the disease.

Launching the strategy Mr Paterson said:

28,000 otherwise healthy cattle were slaughtered last year because of bovine TB. Today we start a countdown towards an England free from this terrible disease. We must stop bTB spreading into previously unaffected areas while bringing it under control in places where it has taken hold. I have visited Australia, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland and the USA and we must learn from their successful TB eradication programmes.

Bovine TB is the most pressing animal health problem in the UK. It threatens our cattle farmers' livelihoods and our farming industry as well as the health of wildlife and livestock. We must all work together to become TB free within 25 years.

The strategy follows up measures already in place and includes comprehensive packages tailored to three distinct risk areas across England.

The strategy aims to:

- Preserve the low risk of TB in the north and east of England;
- Stop and reverse the spread of bovine TB at the frontier of the disease, known as the 'edge area'; and
- Reduce the level of infection in the high risk area, mainly in the south west.

Defra is working with the farming industry to introduce risk-based trading to help them make more informed decisions about the cattle they buy. A range of crucial TB risk information such as movement and testing history will be shared at the point of sale so farmers will know the animal's TB testing history before purchase.

Chairman of the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England Michael Seals said:

The draft strategy is the outcome of collaboration between government and industry with one aim: to achieve TB free status for England. Ongoing collaboration and investment by both parties will be essential to develop and deploy the necessary means to achieve this aim.

The strategy, which has been developed by the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England (AHWBE) and the Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Advisory Group for England (TBEAG) draws extensively on experiences in countries such as Australia, New Zealand, USA and the Republic of Ireland, all of which have shown the way to successfully tackle bovine TB through addressing the infection in cattle and in wildlife.

A crucial element is a consideration of options for governance, delivery and funding of the Strategy. The New Zealand experience in particular, demonstrates the significant potential benefits of having a robust government-industry partnership approach to tackling TB.

- Draft strategy and consultation (<https://consult.defra.gov.uk/farming/tb/>)
- Infographic on the strategy (<http://www.flickr.com/photos/defragovuk/>)
- Audio: News clips of Owen Paterson speaking about Bovine TB (<https://soundcloud.com/defragovuk>)

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+ full page history

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2. 4 July 2013 First published.

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