



**Our ref RFI 4101**  
**Date 27<sup>th</sup> July 2011**

Dear xxxxxxxxx

### **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Tuberculin usage from 1956 to 2011**

I refer to your request for information about tuberculin usage from 1956 to 2011. We received your request on the 29<sup>th</sup> June 2011. Your request has been considered under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

As stated in references 1, 2 and 3 of your message of 28 June, tuberculins (avian and bovine) manufactured by ID Lelystad BV (since 2010 Prionics Lelystad BV, Lelystad, The Netherlands) was first issued for TB testing of cattle in GB in October 2005.

From then on, stocks of Lelystad tuberculins were alternated with Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA) Weybridge tuberculins for release to veterinary practices and Animal Health (now AHVLA) on a strict temporal basis, dependent on the shelf-life of the available stocks from each manufacturer.

Section 5.0 (Figure 1) of the VLA Tuberculin Usage Report (January 2005-March 2007) available on Defra's website (i.e. reference #1 in your email of 28 June 2011) provides the relevant information on the relative monthly usage of each tuberculin (VLA or Lelystad) over the period of analysis stated in the title of the report. A subsequent report produced by VLA to update their previous analysis with additional data to the end of June 2009 contains the equivalent figure on page 8 (report attached).

The alternate use of Weybridge and Lelystad tuberculins continued in GB until tuberculin production at VLA Weybridge ceased and stocks eventually ran out in September 2009. Thereafter, only tuberculins from Prionics Lelystad have been in use in the bovine TB testing programme in GB and, consequently, there is no equivalent tuberculin skin test data from cattle tested with VLA tuberculin to compare with. VLA (now AHVLA) have not carried out further comparative monitoring/analyses of tuberculins since then, as the only antigens in use are those from Lelystad.

Going back in time, between 1975 and October 2005 all cattle (100%) in GB had been tuberculin skin tested for TB with bovine and avian PPD tuberculins manufactured at the VLA Weybridge, from cultures of *Mycobacterium bovis* (strain AN5) and *M. avium* (strain D4ER) of the stated nominal potency, respectively. Once again, there is no data from

different tuberculin manufacturers to compare over that period.

Prior to 1975, *M. tuberculosis* strains DT, C and PN were used for the production of bovine tuberculin at VLA Weybridge (see Pritchard DG 1988, J. Comp. Path.). These strains (the same as those employed for human tuberculin production) were originally chosen because their yield on glycerol-containing media was greater than that obtained with *M. bovis*. However, in 1975 PPD production at VLA switched to use *M. bovis* AN5, a strain that was originally isolated in England circa 1948 and which is now used worldwide for bovine PPD production (see Paterson AB, J. Comp. Path. 1948).

The existing tuberculin skin test interpretation rules for cattle in GB were adopted after a series of field experiments were conducted in the early 1970s to support the switch from *M. tuberculosis* to *M. bovis* tuberculin (see Lesslie et al. Veterinary Record, 1975). Those rules are now incorporated into the relevant Council Directive 64/432/EEC and harmonised across the EU. We do not hold information on the skin test interpretation applied in GB before 1975.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. The information you requested may now be published on our website together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context.

I attach Annex A, which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you.

I also attach Annex B giving contact details should you be unhappy with the services you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact the Customer Contact Unit at the email address below.

Yours sincerely

Defra TB Programme

**Email:** [ccu@correspondence@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ccu@correspondence@defra.gsi.gov.uk)