

New Zealand's top TB experts back from Wales

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Two senior Animal Health Board (AHB) executives recently returned from Wales where they have been presenting information on New Zealand's management of bovine tuberculosis (TB).

Dr Paul Livingstone and AHB Chairman John Dalziel were invited to speak at the Royal Welsh Show by the country's Chief Vet, Dr Christianne Glossop.

They described New Zealand's world-leading TB control tactics to Welsh farmers and vets and identified differences between the two nations' programmes. They told farmers that targeted wildlife control must play a greater role in the drive to eradicate the disease from Wales.

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“The Welsh TB epidemic can only be beaten if the disease is tackled in wildlife as well as cattle,” Dr Livingstone said.

“In New Zealand, possums are the main wildlife carrier and transmitter of TB. We have been able to successfully manage the disease here through targeted, effective pest control.

“Badgers appear to be the main carrier of the disease in Wales and, based on New Zealand’s experience with infected wildlife, are likely to be the primary source of infection for most cattle herds.

“Controlling the badger population in Wales is a difficult proposition though, as they are a protected species.”

The Welsh Assembly is looking to implement some of the methods developed in New Zealand to control TB.

“Welsh farmers and vets are determined to take advantage of new information, advice and best practice. They want to learn from and make use of our successful TB control methods, which are considered world-leading,” Dr Livingstone said.

“The Welsh Regional Eradication Delivery Boards, for example, have been loosely modelled on New Zealand’s TB free committees. These committees allow the AHB to maintain effective links with the farming community and

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Wales is now moving in the same direction.

“Farmer input into New Zealand’s TB control programme has been particularly useful. Protecting the agricultural sector is after all an essential outcome of the TB free scheme.

“Wales has also introduced annual herd testing this year to identify the extent of the TB problem in cattle. This is a vital component of New Zealand’s scheme, particularly when we are faced with a lack of knowledge as to the source and extent of an infection.

“Welsh cattle are now TB tested every 12 months and annual movements in and out of most areas are allowed only after pre-movement testing,” Dr Livingstone said.

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