

Bovine TB Information Note 02/16

A more robust approach for resolving TB breakdowns in the High Risk Area of England

10 March 2016

On 6 April 2016 we will be introducing changes to the process followed on detection of a TB breakdown in the High Risk Area (HRA) of England.

The high TB recurrence rate for breakdown herds in the HRA, coupled with the limited sensitivity of the skin test, suggest that in some cases TB restrictions have been lifted too soon when infected animals still remain in the herd. We also know that many infected animals display no lesions at slaughter and do not produce positive culture results.

Therefore, from 6 April all new breakdown herds in the HRA, regardless of post-mortem or laboratory culture results, will require two consecutive short interval herd tests with negative results, read under 'severe' interpretation¹, before restrictions are lifted. The initial disclosing test where reactors are found will also be reinterpreted at 'severe' interpretation. Thereafter, any further tests that might be necessary would be read under 'standard' interpretation² provided that no post-mortem or laboratory evidence of TB is found. This policy already operates in the TB Edge Area of England and improves the sensitivity of the breakdown testing regimes markedly.

In introducing this measure our objective is to find more infected animals and to reduce the risk of prematurely lifting TB restrictions on infected herds, for the benefit of the directly affected herd owners and their trading partners.

Additionally, in the Low Risk Area (LRA) of England a proportion of all the cattle herds that suffer a new TB breakdown with no post-mortem evidence of disease will also require two consecutive short interval tests with negative results at 'severe' interpretation. Those are herds contiguous to a lesion- or culture-positive TB breakdown herd, herds that had suffered another TB breakdown in the previous four years, or herds that need to be tested every year by virtue of their business pattern (e.g. hirers of bulls, dealer herds, regular buyers of cattle from Ireland, etc.)

¹ Severe interpretation means a more rigorous interpretation of the tuberculin skin test in line with Council Directive 64/432/EEC

² Standard interpretation means the routine interpretation of the tuberculin skin test in line with Council Directive 64/432/EEC

Further information

Guidance on [TB testing intervals for 2016](#) is available on GOV.UK, including a GB map of the TB testing intervals.

Please visit the [TB Hub](#) for more information on this new policy and more general information on Bovine TB.

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