------ Forwarded Message ------
From: xxxxxxxxxx@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
To: xxxxxxxxxxx
Cc: xxxxxxxxx;xxxxxxxxxx
Sent: 10/04/2015 10:48:53
Subject: Re. your enquiry about bovine TB persistence in Wigtown

Dear xxxxxx

I write in response to your enquiries sent by e-mail on 18 and 19 March 2015, concerning the incidence of bovine TB in Wigtownshire in 2014 and certain information in the National Bovine TB statistics for 2014 - published on government websites on 11 March 2015.

The incidence of bovine tuberculosis in Wigtownshire in 2014 continued at its traditionally low and stable level, consistent with Scotland's OTF status. The most important measure is the number of new confirmed incidents of bovine TB in any given area, together with an analysis of where disease might have come from. In 2014 there were nine new confirmed incidents of bovine TB in Wigtownshire (eight cases on farm, plus a case imported by a Wigtownshire farmer direct for slaughter). Six of these were the result of buying cattle from outside Scotland, and three other cases were all negative on culture. All of these incidents were eradicated and restrictions have been lifted. Although this number may appear to be significantly larger than the two to three cases seen annually since 2009, it is the origin / source of these cases that is important. We usually do see small numbers of new confirmed outbreaks in Wigtownshire each year, largely as a result of the traditional cattle trading patterns associated with this county and certain other higher incidence areas of the UK.

To answer your other queries - there are no persistent pockets of bovine tuberculosis in Wigtownshire or elsewhere in Scotland, and there have been no post-mortem examinations of badgers from Wigtownshire in the last six years. The Scottish Government is acutely aware of the threat that any emerging wildlife reservoirs could pose, and on-going and intensive analysis is dedicated to the early detection of changes in the epidemiology of the disease in Scotland.

I now turn to your analysis of the number of herds tested and the number of TB restricted herds in Wigtownshire. The number of herds tested in any given area of Scotland is informed by a four yearly background skin testing programme, with exemptions for low risk herds, and additional breakdown testing where required. The annual figure for 2013, of 123 herds tested out of 480 total herds, is within expectations given the low number of new confirmed outbreaks in that year.

The number of herds affected by TB restrictions in any given month/year is described in two columns in the published national statistics, where it is important to distinguish between prevalence and incidence:

1.   "Disease restricted herds" (The number of herds that had lost their OTF status at some time during the period shown due to a TB incident). If a herd was under movement restrictions for more than a calendar month it would appear again in the next month's figures, so the monthly figures are not all different herds, and longstanding breakdowns may distort the figures by appearing in several month's figures. The monthly figures cannot then be added together to describe a number of individually different herds restricted annually.

2. "Herds under restriction" includes the important annual figure which describes the number of herds under TB movement restrictions at the end of a year. It includes herds under restriction due to disease or an overdue test at the end of the period. This is slightly different from "disease restricted herds" but not much. 2014 is slightly higher than previous years but is not a cause for concern given the earlier information provided:

Year Wigtown
2008 7
2009 4
2010 7
2011 12
2012 11
2013 9
2014 16
I am grateful for the help of local Scottish Government, APHA and Defra colleagues, together with colleagues in the Animal Health and Welfare Statistical team, for some of the detailed information provided.

Yours sincerely,

xxxxx
Endemic Disease Control
Animal Health & Welfare
The Scottish Government
Tel: 0131 244 9243