

# History of bovine TB controls

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Last updated 08 April 2014

The legal responsibility for animal health and welfare matters in Wales was transferred to the Welsh Ministers in 2005.

## History

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The national voluntary eradication programme was established in 1935. At this time:

- at least 40% of cows in dairy herds were infected with *M. bovis*
- at least 0.5% of cows yield tuberculosis milk
- *M. bovis* is believed to be responsible for over 2,500 human deaths.

The programme of testing cattle for bovine TB with the slaughter of reactor animals began in 1947. This test and slaughter programme became compulsory in 1950. Since then there have been many policy developments to control the disease in cattle and wildlife. These are

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some of the policies we have put in place as part of our TB Eradication Programme:

## 2004

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- The Assembly's Environment, Planning and Countryside Committee carries out a policy review into bovine TB in Wales. It recommends a holistic approach to tackling all aspects associated with the spread of bovine TB and for an Intensive Treatment Area (ITA) to be established. The Wales TB Action Group is also created following the recommendations of the report.

## 2005

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- The functions of the Secretary of State in the Animal Health Act 1981 are devolved in relation to Wales to the National Assembly for Wales. Legal responsibility for animal health and welfare matters in Wales is transferred to the Welsh Ministers.
- The first Chief Veterinary Officer for Wales is appointed.

## 2006

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- The principal legislation for TB in Wales, the Tuberculosis (Wales) Order 2006, comes in to force. Mandatory

pre-movement cattle testing is first introduced. Cattle aged over 15 months of age that are moving out of a 1 or 2 yearly tested herd must have tested negative to a TB test within 60 days prior to movement unless the herd, or movement, meets one of the exemptions.

- The Order also introduces enhanced cattle controls which prohibit trade from herds with an overdue tuberculin test. Herd restrictions are applied as soon as a test becomes overdue.
- A biosecurity Intensive Treatment Area (ITA), to raise awareness, understanding and uptake of biosecurity on farms, is established for 15 months across an area of approximately 100 km<sup>2</sup> in South-West Wales.

## 2007

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- A survey of *M. bovis* infection in badgers found dead in Wales takes place. The final report provides further evidence of an association between infection in cattle and badgers in Wales.
- From March, pre-movement testing for bovine TB is extended to include all animals from 1 and 2 yearly testing herds over the age of six weeks (42

days).

## **2008 – 1,198 new TB incidents and 11,401 cattle slaughtered due to TB.**

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- The Deer Initiative is tasked with investigating bovine TB in wild deer in Wales. From the samples provided, the overall prevalence of *M. bovis* is found to be 3.1%.
- The final report of the Rural Development Sub-committee inquiry into bovine TB recommends, amongst other things, the establishment of further ITAs.
- The TB Eradication Programme structure is established, including a Programme Board and Technical Advisory Group, to vigorously pursue a programme of bovine TB eradication in Wales. The Wales TB Action Group is discontinued. Its responsibilities are assumed by the Animal Health and Welfare Strategy Steering Committee.
- Three Regional bovine TB Eradication Delivery Boards are established to consider regional approaches to dealing with the disease.
- The Tuberculosis (Testing and Powers of Entry) (Wales) Order 2008 grants

powers for inspectors to enter land and to obtain a warrant for the purposes of testing non-bovine animals for the disease.

- TB Health Check Wales is undertaken to test all cattle herds in Wales for bovine TB. Upon completion (in 2009) the number of overdue tests is greatly reduced and there is a better understanding of the overall disease picture.

## **2009 – 1,186 new TB incidents and 11,671 cattle slaughtered due to TB.**

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- Inconclusive Reactor policy is changed in Wales to remove potentially infected animals sooner. The target for the time taken to remove reactor cattle is reduced to 10 working days.
- In November, the European Commission formally agrees the first ever UK bovine TB Eradication Plan (for 2010) which sets out the programme for the surveillance, control and eradication of TB in cattle in the UK.
- The North Wales Regional TB Eradication Delivery Board sets up a biosecurity ITA in a region of low

recorded incidence of the disease.

Biosecurity visits, undertaken using the scoring tool developed for use in the previous biosecurity ITA, take place in 2009 and 2011.

## **2010 – 1,039 new TB incidents and 7,619 cattle slaughtered due to TB.**

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- Intensive Action Area (IAA) is established in North Pembrokeshire. Biosecurity visits to all landowners in the IAA are undertaken using the scoring tool. Enhanced cattle controls, including six-monthly surveillance testing intervals and increased pre-movement testing requirements are also established.
- All cattle herds in Wales are now subject to an annual surveillance testing regime and, as a result, pre-movement testing for bovine TB is mandatory across Wales (except where exemptions apply).
- The Tuberculosis (Wales) Order 2010 removes some pre-movement cattle testing exemptions. It also includes the requirement to present cattle for removal to slaughter and allows for an animal that has not been tested to be

treated as though it has tested positively for bovine TB and for it to be slaughtered on farm.

- The Order also introduces Veterinary Improvement Notices, which give the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency (AHVLA) in Wales the legal authority to issue cattle keepers with a notice to take certain actions to reduce the risk of spreading TB either within their own herd or to others. Compensation payments to cattle keepers who do not adhere to regulations, do not follow advice provided in Veterinary Improvement Notices or allow their TB test to become overdue may now be reduced.
- The South East Wales Regional TB Eradication Delivery Board sets up a project on Gower peninsula to eradicate the disease locally through biosecurity measures and enhanced cattle controls.
- The Veterinary Laboratories Agency produces a report, following sampling of feral goats in North Wales. No bovine TB is found in the samples submitted.
- A Welsh Badger Vaccination Technical Group is established to consider the use of injectable BCG vaccine in

badgers as part of a comprehensive approach to TB eradication in Wales.

- The European Commission formally agrees the UK bovine TB Eradication Plan for 2011.

## **2011 – 1,043 new TB incidents and 8,068 cattle slaughtered due to TB.**

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- The Tuberculosis (Wales) Order 2011 introduces further controls for non-bovines which allow for compensation and powers to test camelids, goats and deer. It also requires that keepers of these animals keep a record of their movement.
- Cattle testing positive for bovine TB are DNA tagged to further strengthen controls preventing spread of the disease. This helps to clearly identify reactor cattle for removal and to verify that the correct cattle have been slaughtered.
- An independent panel undertakes a review of the scientific evidence base regarding the eradication of bovine TB in Wales.
- The Badger Vaccination Technical Group recommends the implementation of badger vaccination in areas of high

TB incidence and high cattle density.

The recommendations are agreed by the Programme Board.

- The European Commission formally agrees the UK bovine TB Eradication Plan for 2012.

## **2012 – 1,119 new TB incidents and 9,308 cattle slaughtered due to TB.**

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- The Strategic Framework for bovine TB Eradication in Wales is launched.
- A five year badger vaccination project begins in the Intensive Action Area in south west Wales. 1,424 badgers are vaccinated in the first year.
- All known goat and camelid keepers located within the IAA have their animals TB tested. No bovine TB infection is detected in any of the goats or camelids tested.
- The European Commission formally agrees the UK bovine TB Eradication Plan for 2013.

## **2013 – 868 new TB incidents and 6,102 cattle slaughtered due to TB.**

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- A project board is formed jointly

between Welsh Government and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The purpose of the project board is to oversee the design and implementation of trials to evaluate the performance of the vaccination of cattle and the test to differentiate between infected and vaccinated animals (DIVA) in the field.

- Changes to cattle movements, including changes to the PrMT exemptions and the removal of approved quarantine units are implemented across Wales. Further changes require that the movement of cattle from TB restricted herds must be made within 30 days of a clear test.
- A year long project is established to evaluate the epidemiology of the disease within six defined 'cluster' areas. A lead TB field epidemiologist for Wales is also appointed to oversee the cluster project and make recommendations for future adoption across the wider country.
- Some of the cattle controls in place within the IAA are simplified and harmonised with national policies, where these have been strengthened.
- A survey of *M. bovis* infection in

badgers found dead in the IAA takes place. From the samples provided in the first year, the overall prevalence of *M. bovis* is found to be 19%.

- Cymorth TB, a project to provide additional advice and support to farmers in order to clear up breakdowns quickly and to support herds in maintaining disease freedom, is developed and piloted for six months in six areas across Wales.
- The Badger Vaccination Grant, to support privately delivered badger vaccination projects in Wales, is established.
- 1,352 badgers are captured and vaccinated during the second year of the badger vaccination project in the IAA.
- The European Commission formally agrees the UK bovine TB Eradication Plan for 2014.