



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

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# **Cattle biosecurity: a joint Defra/industry action plan for improving herd resilience to bovine TB**

**Produced by Defra on behalf of a Defra/industry working group**

**December 2014**

# Introduction

1. The encouragement of better on and off farm biosecurity (that is, measures to reduce the risk of transmission of bovine TB between cattle and between badgers and cattle - and thereby a reduction in the incidence of bovine TB in cattle) was one of the commitments in the Government's TB Strategy (published in April 2014). That has formed the basis for the Defra-instigated cattle biosecurity project.
2. A workshop held at the Royal Agricultural University on 1 May 2014 collected the views of a broad range of experts on measures that could be expected to improve biosecurity and thereby improve national resilience to bovine TB. A long list of potential measures emerged from that workshop. These were then considered in more detail by a joint government and industry Working Group.
3. The Working Group met three times and produced this action plan. Further detail can be found in the annex to this document.

## Actions

### Knowledge and data

**Action 1:** We will develop collectively agreed written information, advice and guidance.

**Action 2:** We will establish a clearer division of responsibilities between APHA, farmers' own vets and others, so that farmers and others are clear whom to ask for help in prescribed circumstances.

**Action 3:** We will establish a single national hub for biosecurity (and, ideally, other) information, advice, guidance and research material.

**Action 4:** We will help farmers to understand local TB risk.

### Evidence

**Action 5:** We will generate cost and benefit data for measures considered to be good biosecurity practices.

**Action 6:** We will identify, and seek to fill, those knowledge gaps we believe are the biggest barriers to uptake of good biosecurity practices.

## Communication

**Action 7:** We will devise a cross-cutting biosecurity campaign.

**Action 8:** We will make better use of existing farm visits to give out good biosecurity advice.

**Action 9:** We will develop, and then promote, TB accreditation and farm health schemes.

**Action 10:** We will produce simple, accessible biosecurity case studies to highlight both successes and lessons learned on working farms.

## Education and training

**Action 11:** We will encourage the provision by land-based colleges of bite-sized vocational and refresher training opportunities on farm biosecurity for farmers and farm workers.

**Action 12:** We will ensure that private vets have access to detailed guidance on good biosecurity practices and opportunities for training.

**Action 13:** We will seek to organise a programme of farm visits to highlight the good work that has been done by many working farmers to reduce TB and other disease risks.

## Equipment

**Action 14:** We will explore opportunities for providing small capital grants to aid investment in farm biosecurity.

**Action 15:** We will consider production of recommended standards for equipment designed to aid farm biosecurity, such as cattle feeders and badger exclusion materials.

## Next steps

4. The action plan will be supported by a more detailed delivery plan. Defra will coordinate implementation, supported by a small expert steering group.

5. We would like to thank the external members of the Working Group for their time and input:

- Derek Armstrong, DairyCo
- Andrew Cobner, British Cattle Veterinary Association

- Chris Dodds Livestock Auctioneers Association
- Gareth Enticott, Cardiff University
- Andy Foot, Farmer
- John Gatenby, Farmer
- Rob Harrison, Farmer
- Sophie James, South West TB Farm Advisory Service
- Joseph Keating, EBLEX
- Robbie McDonald, Exeter University
- John Royle, NFU
- Stephanie Young, Trading Standards England

## **Defra TB Programme**

# Annex

## Knowledge and data

### **Action 1: We will develop collectively agreed written information, advice and guidance.**

The Group identified this as a priority – information, advice and guidance (primarily focussing on TB but with benefits to control of other diseases) on what constitutes good biosecurity must be accepted by all. It must be tailored to different risk areas. Defra will take the lead in bringing organisations together to collectively agree information, advice and guidance.

### **Action 2: We will establish a clearer division of responsibilities between APHA, farmers' own vets and others, so that farmers and others are clear whom to ask for help in prescribed circumstances.**

The Group emphasised the advantages of greater involvement of farmers' own vets, but definitive guidance is needed to clarify the division of responsibilities between private and Government vets and others.

### **Action 3: We will establish a single national hub for biosecurity (and, ideally, other) information, advice, guidance and research material.**

It was recognised that farmers are faced with a wealth of biosecurity advice material, adding to confusion of what constitutes good/best practice. On the other hand, the wealth of relevant intelligence and research material rarely finds its way to private vets. A single hub would overcome these problems.

### **Action 4: We will help farmers to understand local TB risk.**

Defra's development of an electronic map showing TB breakdown locations will help farmers to reassess regularly the local risks to their farms.

## Evidence

### **Action 5: We will generate cost and benefit data for measures considered to be good biosecurity practices.**

Investment in biosecurity measures will depend, in part, on the likely impact on business returns. The absence of good knowledge on costs and benefits is a disincentive for some. We will commission and publish cost benefit analyses for the good biosecurity practices that could be widely adopted in England, such as farm building badger exclusion measures.

### **Action 6: We will identify, and seek to fill, those knowledge gaps we believe are the biggest barriers to uptake of good biosecurity practices.**

The Group acknowledged that research on biosecurity has been limited to date, with little accessible information on measures that could be the most effective TB resilience measures on farm, at pasture, in transport and at markets and shows.

## Communication

### **Action 7: We will devise a cross-cutting biosecurity campaign.**

We want to influence farmers and allied businesses to do more to improve their resilience to disease, especially bovine TB. The livestock industry has skilled communicators and marketeers that can help us to achieve that. As part of that, we will run a competition to come up with the most effective straplines.

### **Action 8: We will make better use of existing farm visits to give out good biosecurity advice.**

Private vets, government bodies and others spend a lot of time with livestock farmers but few have the knowledge or materials to give good biosecurity advice. So we will work with representative bodies to encourage and equip them to help farmers understand their options for improving disease resilience.

### **Action 9: We will develop, and then promote, TB accreditation and farm health schemes.**

Work on CHeCS accreditation standards for bovine TB is in progress. It will not be appropriate for all livestock producers but could play a part in raising standards as it has for BVD.

**Action 10: We will produce simple, accessible biosecurity case studies to highlight both successes and lessons learned on working farms.**

Case study material can be influential. There is relatively little of it on biosecurity/TB resilience and it can be hard to find.

## **Education and training**

**Action 11: We will encourage the provision by land-based colleges of bite-sized vocational and refresher training opportunities on farm biosecurity for farmers and farm workers.**

The working group recognised the importance of training providers and teaching staff having good quality biosecurity-related teaching materials and for biosecurity to be included in colleges' educational and vocational training offer. We would like to see farm employees and others in the livestock sector, including hauliers, show organisers, auction markets, benefiting from this training.

**Action 12: We will ensure that private vets have access to detailed guidance on good biosecurity practices and opportunities for training.**

Many private vets are well positioned to influence their clients on farm health matters but they don't all have the training or support materials. We would like to put that right. New training opportunities should qualify as CPD.

**Action 13: We will seek to organise a programme of farm visits to highlight the good work that has been done by many working farmers to reduce TB and other disease risks.**

These visits could be combined with, or offered as part of, vocational training on biosecurity. We shouldn't limit these to farms that have no history of bovine TB – measures that have limited the damage caused by the disease are of interest to farmers in the high risk areas and they should be showcased.

## **Equipment**

**Action 14: We will explore opportunities for providing small capital grants to aid investment in farm biosecurity.**

Options for RDPE and other funding should be explored. Small grants need to be simple to apply for. They could be linked to recommendations from recognised TB farm advisers. A pilot scheme should be conducted before wider roll out is considered.

**Action 15: We will consider production of recommended standards for equipment designed to aid farm biosecurity, such as cattle feeders and badger exclusion materials**

There is confusing and conflicting advice, including from government, on specifications for equipment and materials designed to aid farmers' attempts to improve biosecurity. This needs to be addressed. Guidance and training materials should include advice on appropriate equipment and materials.



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