



Introduction

Bovine TB (tuberculosis) is a chronic, debilitating and infectious disease. It not only affects cattle but can occasionally infect humans, wildlife and other animals too. It is mainly, but not exclusively, a respiratory disease caught by breathing in droplets of sputum containing the TB bacteria and therefore infection can be caused by close contact with infected cattle, wildlife or other animals. Infection is also possible through other routes, for example: by eating feed contaminated with mucus, sputum, urine, saliva, pus, milk or faeces from infectious animals. Notably, calves can be infected by milk from infected cows.

Good management, careful sourcing of cattle and biosecurity practices go a long way towards keeping bovine TB out of your herd.

The measures set out in this leaflet are examples of good practice, but are by no means exhaustive, and will help to reduce the risk of TB and other infectious diseases entering your herd, either from other cattle or from infected wildlife.

Current control measures include routine skin testing of herds at regular intervals, additional and more targeted testing of TB-infected and at-risk herds, TB surveillance of cattle at slaughter, movement restrictions of infected herds, the use of pre- and post- movement testing, good biosecurity and animal husbandry, including reducing the risk of contact with wildlife, and sensible precautions when trading or moving cattle.

Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of TB testing

Routine herd testing for TB is carried out to detect infected herds, to maintain the Officially TB Free Status of cattle herds and thus their ability to trade. Routine testing, supplemented by slaughterhouse surveillance, provides information on the TB status of each herd and its surrounding area. It is important that you keep strictly to the TB testing schedule set by APHA so that infection can be detected as early as possible.

You can help the testing programme by:

- being prepared for the tests and allocating sufficient time for tests to be completed
- ensuring that your handling facilities are fit for purpose, safe for the animals, handlers and TB testers to use and that they allow all the procedures necessary for the TB test to be carried out
- ensuring that all requests for post-movement, tracing or check testing are acted upon promptly
- presenting all the eligible cattle in your herd for TB skin (and, where required, gamma-interferon blood) testing

The leaflet 'Testing for TB in your herd: what this means to you' explains the requirements of the test, how we carry it out and why it is important. It will help you to prepare for your test and to understand why we test your cattle.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/testing-for-tb-in-your-herd>

Keep your farm and equipment cleansed and disinfected

Under certain conditions, particularly in wet and cold weather, the TB bacteria can survive in the environment for a long time. For this reason it is good practice to ensure that:

- livestock are kept away from freshly spread slurry and that bedding and manure are disposed of in such a way that stock cannot gain access to them
- pressure washers, brushes, hoses and an approved disinfectant are available at the farm entrances, and that visitors use them
- any farm machinery and equipment which is shared with another farm is cleansed and disinfected, and that any contractors you use are scrupulous about their own biosecurity
- any TB test reactors or inconclusive reactors are isolated and buildings, equipment contaminated by them are thoroughly cleansed and disinfected and that any grass land grazed by them is emptied of cattle for as long as possible, ideally 60 days
- you use disinfectants that are appropriate for TB. See the guidance on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/defra-approved-disinfectant-when-and-how-to-use-it>

Maintain farm boundaries and gateways

Good husbandry practices will help to reduce the risk of TB entering your herd, both from cattle movements and from any undetected infected herds in your area and from infected wildlife.

In general you should ensure that:

- you keep perimeter boundaries and gateways well maintained and sufficiently robust to prevent straying or nose to nose contact with neighbouring cattle : the same applies for any additional premises - whether owned or rented - on which you keep stock
- you use double fencing, especially at gateways, where nose to nose contact could occur, this would need to provide a minimum 2 m of separation to be effective
- you consider any common grazing you use and any potential nose to nose contact at shared watercourses as these are areas of particular risk
- you should attempt to fence off badger setts and latrines, and limit, as far as practical, all contact between your cattle and wildlife.

Think about how you house your livestock

Consider the most common method of spread of this disease which is by air borne spread (aerosols) and ensure that livestock housing is well ventilated and animals are not overstocked. It is always preferable to restrict the number of animals sharing airspace when considering the spread of any respiratory disease.

Animal housing, feed stores and farmyards should be made wildlife proof as far as is practical.

- Sides of the building should not be open, but of a smooth and solid construction and more than 1.5 metres high to prevent wildlife from gaining access.
- Doors and gates should be of smooth and solid construction and a minimum of 1.5 metres high. Solid sheets of metal can be added to a 5 bar gate.
- Gaps at the sides and under doors and walls should be no greater than 10cm and must not be able to be enlarged by digging or chewing.
- Where effluent or waste water drains into a soak away ditch, wildlife must not have access and wire or electrified pig netting at mains voltage should be used to prevent such access. This is to prevent the contamination of the environment and wildlife.
- Where electric fencing is to be used at the boundary of the housing or farmyard to ensure access to wildlife is denied it is important to note that strands of wire should be at 10, 15, 20 and 30cm above the ground.
- If securing your buildings is not an option, consider storing cattle feed in solid bins with locking lids
- Try to feed cattle in secure buildings or yards

- Raise feeders, troughs and mineral licks at least 75cm off the ground
- Cover the face of silage clamps, or prevent access through the use of electric fencing. Electric fence wires should be at 10cm, 15cm, 20cm and 30cm intervals above the ground
- Clean up any spillages of feed as quickly as possible.

An alternative to adapting the buildings is to ensure a wildlife proof boundary to the farmyard or collection of buildings, such as electric fencing, following FERA guidelines, and this can be in addition to a stock-proof boundary fence. This may be an option where adaptation of the buildings is not practically possible or not economically viable.

In Wales, APHA may serve a Veterinary Improvement Notice (VIN) on stock owners if a Veterinary Inspector thinks that they should be doing something, or should stop doing something, for the purpose of preventing the spread of bovine TB. This is in order to help protect your farm, your locality, and the countryside in general. Failure to comply with a VIN may result in a reduction to the compensation payable if a reactor is identified on your holding.

Health planning for your herd

It is good practice to work with your veterinary surgeon to formulate a health plan for your herd which includes TB. The health plan should specifically consider the current and past TB history of your herd and address the most likely TB risks your herd is faced with. Planning TB prevention together with your vet will allow him/her to give you further advice, based on his/her wider knowledge of the disease occurrence in the area.

Bringing animals into your herd: understanding the risks

Bringing animals into your herd will always carry a risk of introducing disease. Restocking and purchase of animals is, however, important to most farm businesses, and the risk associated with them can be reduced to a minimum by adopting best practice.

In areas with a high risk of TB you will be at risk of spread of infection into your herd from contact with neighbouring cattle and from any contact with wildlife. If you source cattle from areas of the United Kingdom or from other countries with a high risk of TB you will increase this risk further.

You would be best advised to know precisely where your animals have come from; they may have come from the same or another endemic area, but may be from a herd that has a history of recurring breakdowns or a herd with no history of TB breakdowns. They may have come from a herd in a low risk area, but may have moved previously moved from a high risk area into that herd.

As cattle rarely show obvious clinical signs of TB and it is not always possible to detect infected animals by testing, it is even more necessary to make judgements based on the TB status of the area from which the cattle originate and the testing and breakdown history of the herd of origin.

You can reduce the risk of introducing TB by taking the following measures:

Consider breeding your own replacements, but if that is not possible:

- ensure you know the origin of bought-in stock and ask for dates and appropriate evidence of previous TB tests and any history of TB breakdowns.
- check the testing status of your area on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/bovine-tb-testing-intervals-2015>.
- some herds within the low risk areas may have a higher than average risk of infection within the herd and you will also need to consider:
 - does the type of herd have a management system that results in a higher than normal risk of TB? Some herds will be assigned an annual TB testing regime despite being in a 4 year testing area. You should ask what the testing frequency is for the herd of origin
 - has the herd had a recent breakdown? You should ask for the TB history of the herd of origin
- ensure that any incoming stock from high risk areas and the areas in the edge of the high risk areas (i.e. annual testing areas or annual testing regime due to a higher than normal risk) are pre-movement tested before arrival. It is good practice to ask for evidence of that test - a copy of the chart and the date of the pre-movement test. However, bear in mind that a negative pre-movement test result does not totally rule out TB in the incoming animals.
- ensure that bought-in and returning stock are effectively isolated from other livestock, make sure that appropriate isolation facilities are available and that you use them; if using a paddock/field for this purpose, ensure that no contact can be made with your own cattle or with neighbouring livestock. If the risk attached to these animals is high, consider requesting a private post-movement skin test before they join the resident herd
- ensure animal identification and movement records are accurate and up-to-date so that cattle movements between herds can be quickly traced
- seek advice from your private veterinary surgeon on reducing the risk of disease spread from purchased animals
- be aware of the particular disease risk posed by hired or shared animals such as hired bulls, and consider alternative husbandry practices or check the location and testing frequency of herds where the animals have recently resided
- ensure that imported cattle are tested as required and at the correct time intervals
- in the annual testing area, cattle that are to be moved between linked holdings, to/from grass keep, or to/from common grazings must be pre-movement tested. Specific written exemptions to pre-movement testing may be granted by APHA in

certain circumstances. Post-movement testing, instead of pre-movement testing, can only be done by exception and only with prior approval from APHA. In England, pre-movement testing is not required to move cattle between holdings within Sole Occupancy Authorities (SOAs) that only include holdings within 10 miles of the main farm: such movements are permitted under the terms of a general licence issued by Defra. Cattle keepers in Wales can apply for an Interim Land Association Management (ILAM). For further information, see the pre-movement and post-movement testing of cattle guidance on GOV.UK and the Welsh Government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pre-movement-and-post-movement-tb-testing-of-cattle-in-great-britain>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/bovine-tb-information-note-changes-to-tb-cattle-movement-controls-exemptions>

<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/disease/bovinetuberculosis/cattlecontrols/pre-movement-testing/?lang=en>

Minimise the risk of infecting wildlife in your area

Badgers present a particular challenge to cattle farmers trying to keep their herd free of TB. Badgers can be infected with TB and can transmit the disease to cattle, potentially causing a herd breakdown with movement restrictions and slaughter of affected cattle.

Badgers can transmit TB to cattle in two ways:

- direct contact - where an infected badger comes within close proximity to cattle
- indirect contact - through contact with, or ingestion of, feed contaminated with the urine, faeces, saliva etc. of an infected badger

Research suggests that badgers visit farmyards and farm buildings more regularly than previously thought, and in doing so can contaminate unprotected food sources.

Transmission is even more likely to occur within the farmyard and buildings than on pasture:

- badgers have been recorded entering feed stores, cattle housing and silage clamps. They will feed on stored feed, feed spilt in the yard and have even been seen feeding from troughs at the same time as cattle
- badgers have also been observed walking between the legs of housed cattle and collecting bedding from inhabited cattle sheds.
- while in farm buildings, badgers may urinate or defecate on feed or leave deposits of saliva or pus from bite wounds and abscesses
- rain brings earthworms (badgers' preferred food) up to the surface where badgers can easily get to them. As a result, badgers are more likely to visit farmyards and buildings to look for food when the weather has been dry.

To reduce the risk of infection from wildlife you should:

- ensure that you know the location of any badger setts and latrines on your farm, and keep your livestock away from these high risk areas

- avoid, as far as possible, the feeding of cattle at pasture; this can attract badgers and so increase the risk of contamination. If cattle have to be fed at pasture:
 - avoid feeding concentrates on the ground
 - aim to make feeders, water troughs and salt and mineral blocks inaccessible to badgers; where possible raise feeders, troughs and blocks off of the ground by at least 75cm (30 inches)
- feed cattle in secure buildings or yards where practical, making sure there are no gaps or holes through which badgers can gain access
- make your premises less attractive to wildlife, particularly badgers, by taking practical measures to stop them gaining access to feed stores, silage clamps, water and feeding troughs
 - install solid, sheet doors/gates on buildings so badgers cannot climb through, over, or under them
 - ensure the gap between the bottom of gates, doors or fences and the floor is less than 10cm high
 - make sure all gates/doors are securely closed every night
 - regularly clean up any spillages of feed, and
 - clean out troughs regularly
- if buildings cannot be secured, consider storing feed in solid, secure bins with lids that can be closed
- cover the face of silage clamps or prevent access to them by the use of electric fencing. Electric fence wires should be at 10, 15 and 20cm above the ground, and an additional wire at 30cm is useful in providing the most effective deterrent to badgers

These simple measures can reduce the likelihood of badgers visiting your farm buildings and yards and therefore reduce the potential transmission of TB from badgers to your cattle.

And finally

Ensure that you work with your vet to formulate a health plan for your herd.



The Animal and Plant Health Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs working to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.

www.gov.uk/apha

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