

2015 TB Testing Intervals Policy (England)

Principles that apply in 2015:

- a) Routine testing frequencies are still uniformly applied to whole counties, not parishes, with the exception of Cheshire. Parishes are no longer used other than to ensure that tests are evenly distributed throughout the four years of the TB testing cycle in the four yearly testing area (see 'temporal smoothing' below).
- b) Whole counties in the Southwest of England and the West Midlands (Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Worcester, Herefordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Staffordshire, and Shropshire) remain on annual TB testing, on the basis that this represents the area of endemic high TB incidence in England. This also meets the criteria for annual testing as required by EU law.
- c) Additionally, some counties which are at risk of geographic spread of disease in the short to medium term have been placed on annual testing since 2013.
- d) There are no pockets of less frequent routine testing within this annual testing area (as has been the case since 2010).
- e) Counties that have been placed wholly onto annual testing since 2013 are Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, and East Sussex.
- f) From 1 January 2015 six monthly whole herd testing will be introduced in the Edge Area part of Cheshire and will replace the current annual whole herd testing and radial testing regimes which apply to herds in this area. The objective of this change is to speed up the detection of infected herds in this area of increasing incidence and to facilitate the scheduling of tests by farmers, OV practices and APHA. The High Risk area part of Cheshire remains in annual testing.
- g) The rest of the North and East of England, where the incidence and risk of TB has historically been very low and there is no evidence of a wildlife reservoir of TB, will remain on background four yearly routine testing. No areas in these counties are placed on more frequent testing. However any individual herds in the four-yearly testing ('low risk') area that are considered to be at a higher risk of infection (because of management practices or recent disease history) will still be placed on annual testing.
- h) Herds that are within a 3km radius of (or epidemiologically linked to) a new OTFW breakdown in the four-yearly testing ('low risk') area will still temporarily be placed on an increased TB testing regime, consisting of an immediate herd test followed by two more herd tests at six and 12 month intervals. If this enhanced surveillance fails to detect further evidence of

infection in the vicinity of an OTFW breakdown, the herds will revert to background four yearly testing more quickly than under the old PTI regime; i.e. normally, within 18 months of the first test triggered by the breakdown. Herds that are within a 3km radius of (or epidemiologically linked to) a new OTFW breakdown in the Edge area part of Cheshire will also be placed on an increased TB testing regime, consisting of an immediate herd test followed by one more herd test after six months before the herd goes back to its default annual testing frequency.

- i) Interferon-gamma blood testing will continue to apply in OTFW breakdowns in the four yearly tested area. Since January 2014, when the 'edge area' measures were fully rolled out, all OTFW breakdowns in the edge area are subject to interferon-gamma testing.
- j) To optimise the effectiveness of TB surveillance in lower risk areas, the routine testing of herds in the four yearly testing area should continue to be organised so as to ensure that an equal proportion of herds in a parish undergo routine TB testing each year of the cycle. This 'temporal smoothing' ensures that routine herd tests are distributed equally across the parish over time, thus increasing the probability of detecting infection in the area as early as possible.
- k) APHA retains the discretion to shorten herd testing intervals in response to changes in the local disease situation throughout the year.
- l) Forward and back tracings from OTFW breakdowns and mandatory pre-movement testing of cattle in annually, and now six-monthly, tested herds continues, subject to certain exemptions i.e. open farms, producers/retailers of raw milk, etc.

**TB Programme Defra
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