

Bovine TB Information Note 03/16

Reducing TB risks from the sale of cattle from 4-yearly testing herds in England

10 March 2016

A new voluntary Government-funded ‘pre-sale’ TB check test will be introduced on 6 April 2016. It will be available to cattle keepers in England with herds on 4 year surveillance testing, who are planning to sell all or part of their herd and who meet certain other qualifying criteria. This will help farmers to have peace of mind when taking their animals to sale, and offer assurance to buyers.

Aim of the new test and pilot scheme

In offering this test our aim is to help the industry in reducing the likelihood of cattle with undetected TB infection being moved in large numbers through sale points. The eligibility framework has been built to mitigate this specific risk.

We have worked with industry and the veterinary profession to develop this proportionate control to provide an additional safeguard for the Low Risk Area (LRA) and support the aim of achieving Officially TB Free (OTF) status for the LRA in England by 2019.

We are launching this voluntary initiative as a 24-month pilot scheme in order to gauge levels of uptake and impacts. A pilot scheme also allows us to adapt the scheme in response to how it's used. We will hold review points every 6 months and a break point after 12 months to allow maximum flexibility.

This initiative fits within wider activities (including the TB Hub web resource) around risk-based trading and biosecurity, which Defra has also developed in partnership with industry and other stakeholders.

Risk factors and eligibility criteria

This new TB pre-sale test is designed to address the specific TB risk and possible impact posed by sales of cattle from herds that have not been tested within the previous 12 months. Further TB risk factors considered in developing this pilot included the type of animals to be sold and the size of the proposed sale batch.

To be eligible for the test, the seller and their holding/herd must meet the following criteria:

- the premises must not be under TB restrictions
- the herd must be on a 4 yearly TB testing regime

- the proposed sale must consist of 20 or more animals
- the herd must not have been TB tested in the last 12 months
- the sale must include any of the following types of animal:
 - Breeding bulls
 - In-calf females or cows for breeding
 - Dairy heifers / cows >15 months

How to request a test

If the seller meets the eligibility criteria, they should contact APHA to request a test on 03000 200 301 (Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5pm). A brief phone assessment will be completed and the government-funded TB test will be arranged through the seller's usual or preferred TB test veterinary delivery partner.

Cancelling the test

If circumstances change and the proposed sale is cancelled, the test can be cancelled through the delivery partner or through APHA.

The impact of the test results

Herd owners thinking about requesting a pre-sale check test should note that if TB reactors or inconclusive reactors are identified the planned sale is likely to have to be postponed, as is the case with all TB testing. But this should be balanced against the risk and potentially damaging impacts of selling infected cattle and spreading TB to many other farms if the pre-sale test is not carried out. A further consideration is the potential benefit for an uplift in sale prices for cattle that have recently been tested clear.

If the results of the TB check test are negative, the sale can go ahead as planned and any animals that may remain on the seller's holding will be scheduled for a routine herd test (RHT) in 48 months, which is the current default surveillance testing interval for most herds in the LRA. The seller can always ask APHA to bring the next RHT forward a few months, so that it can take place at their preferred time of the year.

Costs

This test is paid for by Government, although to allow the pilot scheme to be as flexible as possible we will apply a cap to participation levels, which, if reached, means we will need to re-assess the scheme.

Further information

Guidance on [TB testing intervals for 2016](#) is available on GOV.UK, including a GB map of the TB testing intervals.

Please visit the [TB Hub](#) for more information on this new policy and more general information on Bovine TB.