



## **Guidance Notes on the Approval and Operation of an Approved Finishing Unit (AFU) to allow the purchase of TB restricted cattle from multiple sources for fattening or finishing (without grazing) in Wales**

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### **Background**

AFUs were introduced to provide an outlet for the fattening and/or finishing of clear tested cattle from TB restricted holdings lacking such facilities. After rearing at the AFU, these animals can only move to slaughter either directly or via an approved slaughter gathering for TB restricted cattle.

AFUs may source cattle from TB restricted premises and may also accept cattle not restricted for TB that have moved without the required pre-movement test, that are exempt from pre-movement testing or that have been pre-movement tested.

The conditions of approval and operation have been formulated to ensure disease security, taking into account that:

- cattle from several different sources (but mainly from TB restricted premises) will be present
- cattle originating from TB restricted premises will have been tested in the previous 90 days with negative results
- turnover of animals will be high
- there must be no possibility of spread of infection locally
- these units should have an individual County Parish Holding (CPH) number allocated
- these units must not have any Sole Occupancy Authority (SOA) or British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) links with any other premises
- in Wales, these units cannot be approved in the Low or Intermediate TB Areas.

The conditions listed below are aimed at ensuring that the AFU remains a discrete, self-contained cattle unit clearly isolated from other cattle herds.

### **Conditions**

VLW can consider the approval of fattening/finishing units primarily for cattle from restricted herds if the proposed premises comply with the following conditions:

- all cattle moved on to the AFU must have had a TB test with negative results in the last 90 days, or not be subject to TB restrictions. These AFUs cannot accept reactors or inconclusive reactors to the tuberculin test, or direct contacts, all of which must be taken directly to slaughter from the TB restricted herd
- all the cattle on the approved unit must move to slaughter, either directly using the general licence (TB24g) or via an approved dedicated slaughter market or collection centre (TB24b) when the conditions of that licence must apply i.e. cattle must have had a clear test for TB in the previous 90 days
- these conditions will also apply to any cattle from unrestricted herds brought onto the approved unit for rearing/fattening
- direct or indirect (e.g. shared troughs/equipment/personnel) contact with susceptible stock outside of the AFU must be impossible
- the cattle in the AFU must be housed in wildlife-proof accommodation adequate for the number of cattle for which the AFU is to be approved
- wildlife-proof in this context refers to species of wild mammals that can act as reservoirs of *Mycobacterium bovis* (e.g. badgers and potentially, wild deer) and suitable conditions include:
  - sides of the building should not be open, but of a smooth and solid construction (i.e. not to allow wildlife to get a purchase) and greater than 1.5m high
  - doors should be of smooth and solid construction (i.e. not to allow wildlife to get a purchase) and a minimum of 1.5m high (solid sheets of metal can be added to a five bar gate)
  - gaps at the sides and under doors and walls should be no greater than 7.5cm 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 could be used to prevent such access. This is to prevent the contamination of the environment and wildlife
- where appropriate electric fencing can be used at the boundary of the AFU to ensure access by wildlife is denied (best practice would also be to include feed stores and silage face etc. in order to prevent adding to the disease risk from the local wildlife). Where electric fencing is used it is important to note that strands of wire should be at 10, 15, 20 and 30cm above the ground
- equipment and machinery used in the AFU should be dedicated and must not be shared with other cattle, whether or not on the same farm premises
- there should be dedicated personnel, or, at the very least, dedicated and disinfectable clothing
- there must be adequate dedicated testing facilities; as a minimum this should incorporate a crush, a sufficiently long race, a collecting yard and a covered testing area
- a system must be in place to collect run-off water and effluent from the unit that prevents contamination of watercourses
- there must be facilities for the storage of manure, used bedding and slurry. After removal, manure and slurry should be treated and stored as set out on the back of the Notice Requiring Cleansing and Disinfection (BT05), to allow for inactivation of *Mycobacterium bovis*. The slurry and manure must then be spread (off the AFU) on arable land or, alternatively, on pasture land to which susceptible stock will have no access for a minimum of 60 days. Slurry should be spread by injection, or other means which minimise the risk of aerosol spread. Records should be kept of all locations and dates of such spreading
- any other conditions considered necessary or appropriate by the VLW.

### Application and Inspection

Persons seeking approval for an AFU should contact their local Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) office, who will then provide them with a copy of the application form.

On receipt of a completed application and plan of the premises, the VLW will arrange for a Veterinary officer (VO) to inspect the proposed premises. Particular attention will be paid to biosecurity and the testing facilities.

Following a satisfactory inspection report from a VO, the VLW will return the form, which will contain the conditions of continued approval, with the necessary approval.

The AFU, which will have its own dedicated CPH (or a separate CPH if within a holding), will be served with a Notice Prohibiting Movement of Bovine Animals (TB02) which will be copied to the relevant Local Authority.

In addition to testing, the premises, records of movements, etc. will be subject to inspections periodically (which may be unannounced) and, as a minimum, on an annual basis, by APHA. Failure to comply with any of the conditions set out in the approval form (including failure to test the cattle on the unit at the prescribed interval) will result in withdrawal of the approval. In this case, TB02 movement restrictions will continue to operate until Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) status can be achieved.

AFUs are commercial enterprises and their owners/operators are best placed to promote their commercial activities. It is up to them to negotiate separately any contractual sale. Upon approval of a holding as an AFU, the owners should be encouraged to register their interest with local farming organisations and advertise on the web, farming press, etc. However, it is not the role of APHA to publicise or give out the details of a particular AFU to farmers affected by TB restrictions. It is for industry stakeholders to update their members on the availability of AFUs for TB restricted cattle.

APHA will list all approved premises on the public website.

### Movements onto the Approved Finishing Unit

Cattle may be moved on to the AFU from a herd under TB movement restrictions under the authority of a movement licence (TB16). These will be issued by the APHA office responsible for the premises of origin. The APHA office responsible for the destination must approve the movement. Cattle from TB restricted herds must have received a tuberculin test with negative results within 90 days preceding their movement to an AFU.

AFUs can accept cattle not restricted for TB that have moved without the required pre-movement test, that are exempt from pre-movement testing or that have been pre-movement tested.

The general licence (TB15a) will be used to move unrestricted cattle on to the AFU.

Movements must comply with the conditions of this licence and cattle must have received a TB test with negative results within 60 days of the movement.

All movement requests will be subject to a risk assessment by APHA and those considered to be high risk will be refused.

## **TB Testing on Approved Finishing Units**

Testing of cattle within the AFU will be on a six monthly basis.

At the six month TB test all cattle within the unit will be tested.

If testing is overdue by 30 days, any general licences will be revoked and the approval as an AFU may be revoked.

## **Movements of Cattle off the Approved Finishing Unit**

Cattle can only leave the AFU for slaughter:

- under a General Licence (TB24g) if destined direct to slaughter
- via an approved collection centre/slaughter market for TB-restricted cattle under licence (TB24b) and must comply with the conditions of that licence (clear tested for TB within the previous 90 days).

## **Action in the Event of a TB Incident in the Approved Finishing Unit**

The AFU will follow the standard APHA procedures for compensation, removal and post mortem of reactors.

Disclosure of reactors or slaughterhouse cases will not trigger short interval testing (SI).

An immediate check test at severe interpretation will be required if a slaughterhouse case is reported, followed by a 90 day check test at severe interpretation.

A 90 day check test at severe interpretation will be required following the identification of reactors or inconclusive reactors.

Providing the test is clear, testing will then revert to six monthly, however if it is not clear, further 90 day check tests may be required.

The owner/operator may wish to depopulate the AFU rather than carrying out a testing programme. In these cases the AFU must be cleansed and disinfected as stated in the conditions on the Notice Requiring Cleansing and Disinfection (BT05). This will be inspected, before restocking is approved.

The VLW may stop the movement of cattle onto the AFU if a severe TB incident is disclosed in the unit as a whole or in a part of it.

## **Action on the Farm of Origin when Animals have been Consigned to an AFU**

Slaughterhouse cases from AFUs should be routinely back traced to the farm of origin and any implications for management of the breakdown at the farm of origin need to be considered. If the supply herd has passed two 60-day tests since the movement, then normally no action would be required, but the case VO may consider the need to instigate further check tests.

### **Premises of origin in Wales only:**

Unless animals consigned to an AFU are subjected to a six month (or other) test on the AFU, or slaughtered without becoming a slaughterhouse case, then their disease status cannot be ascertained.

Therefore, in all other cases, two clear tests (minimum 60 and 120 days after the movement) will be needed on the farm of origin before OTF status can be regained unless considered unnecessary following a veterinary risk assessment.

## **Re-gaining Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) Status (Lifting TB02 Restrictions on the AFU)**

If the intake of cattle into the AFU ceases, the operator must notify the VLW in writing of the intention to seek OTF status.

Once this notification is received, TB02 restrictions can be lifted when all the cattle in the unit have been either slaughtered or subjected to two consecutive short interval tests (SI) at least 60 days apart with negative results, providing no further cattle have moved in within the last 120 days prior to the last clear test.

If the operator of the AFU elects to have all the cattle slaughtered, the unit will have to be cleansed and disinfected as per the conditions on the back of the Notice Requiring Cleansing and Disinfection (BT05) before a withdrawal notice (TB10) is served and restocking with livestock can be allowed. Disinfection will have to be confirmed as satisfactory by an inspection by a VO or other authorised officer.

In either case, restrictions will remain on manure/slurry until the treatment prescribed in the general conditions listed above has been completed.

APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.