Regional Office: South East;
County: East Sussex (part)
End of year for 2016

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1. Executive summary

In the Edge Area of East Sussex in 2016, there was a decrease in the numbers of bTB incidents, with only one fully confirmed (OTFW) incident and a significant decrease in the numbers of strongly suspected (OTFS) incidents from 16 in 2015 to 11 in 2016.

There was no clear clustering of breakdowns, with the same trend of random geographical distribution as observed in 2015. The only fully confirmed breakdown, located on the border with the HRA, occurred in an Approved Finishing Unit (AFU).

Although the East Sussex endemic area in the HRA has existed for over 25 years, the East Sussex Edge Area does not appear to have any endemic fronts. Looking back to data available from 2012 to 2016, there is no clear evidence of emerging or established infected areas.

One OTFW in the HRA of East Sussex could pose a threat to the Edge Area of East Sussex, as the incident was attributed to infected wildlife and was located only 5 km away from the southern Edge Area border.

The bTB incidence level in the Edge Area of East Sussex decreased in 2016 to 2.7% compared to previous year of 3.7%.

In 2016 no contiguous testing was carried out, reflecting the absence of OTFW breakdowns within the Edge Area of East Sussex.

The pattern of infection in the East Sussex Edge Area is becoming more similar to that seen in the Low Risk Area with a high proportion of OTFS breakdowns rather than OTFW, a low frequency of disclosure through risk-based testing, and a reduced mean duration of restrictions. The lower risk in the East Sussex Edge Area is also reflected by the reduced frequency of spread tracings from the HRA to holdings in this area, and all that did occur in 2016 have proven negative to date.

2. Introduction

A key action in the implementation of the Government’s objective to achieve Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free (OTF) status for England by 2038 was to recognise the different levels of bTB in different parts of the country and varying the approach to control accordingly. To this end three management regions or zones have been established. This report describes the epidemiology of bovine TB in East Sussex which forms part of the ‘Edge’ area (Appendix 1). This area has a low but recently rising incidence of infected farms and control efforts are seeking to slow down and reverse geographic spread, and reduce the incidence rate, with the aim of obtaining OTF status for this area as soon as possible.

Data statement

All data are derived directly from the transactional database ‘Sam’ and so may differ slightly from similar data quoted in other reports which was downloaded in later the year so is more complete, and has had additional review to remove duplicates and correct errors.

3. Cattle industry in the area

Edge area of East Sussex consists of northern and eastern parts of the county plus a narrow strip on the west border with West Sussex. Cattle density is spread evenly within the Edge with 494 herds, the majority of which are small beef finishers and sucklers; two main markets provide a
valuable outlet one within East Sussex, Hailsham Market and one outside the Edge in the neighbouring county, Ashford.

![East Sussex 2016 herds](image)

**Figure 1. Partition of East Sussex Edge herds in 2016**

4. **Overview of the Tb Epidemic in East Sussex**

   **History of TB in the Edge and HRA of East Sussex:**

![Total Incidents, Edge and HRA](image)

**Figure 2. Total number of incidents East Sussex (Edge and HRA)**

In the whole county of East Sussex, there is an overall decrease in the number of bTB incidents disclosed in 2016. The trend of increase of strongly suspected incidents number continues this year as per previous year (2015), in contrast with the picture observed in 2014.
The numbers of incidents in the HRA in 2016 (Figure 3) is showing a similar ratio between the fully confirmed and strongly suspected incidents, the same pattern was also seen in 2012 and 2013 before the creep in the number of incidents back in 2014. 2015 showed a very unusual pattern for a HRA county with a steep increase in OTFS cases.

In the Edge in 2016 (Figure 4), there is a similarity with the previous years, with only one fully confirmed incident but a substantial decrease in the numbers of strongly suspected incidents. As seen in the HRA, these figures are comparable in quantity and ratio with the figures recorded in 2013.
The monthly distribution of incidents described in the figure below is not showing any particular pattern and is shown in the graph below.

![Graph showing monthly distribution of incidents](image)

**Figure 5. Monthly disclosure of bTb incidents in the Edge of East Sussex, 2016**

Geographical distribution of bTB cases (new and ongoing) in the Edge area of East Sussex:

![Map showing geographical distribution of bTB cases](image)

**Figure 6. Geographical distribution of bovine TB cases in the Edge Area of East Sussex**

In 2016 there was no obvious pattern of geographical distribution of incidents. The majority of incidents occurred within the areas with higher cattle densities (though these are still comparatively low compared to other areas). One confirmed case triggered in a non-grazing AFU is located close to the adjacent HRA. In the HRA all the confirmed incidents (5) are located in the endemic area of South Downs.
The geographical distribution of the breakdowns differs slightly in 2016 from previous years when the breakdowns were located more centrally within the Edge.

**Established and emerging infected areas**

Although the East Sussex endemic area in the HRA has existed for 25 years, the East Sussex Edge Area does not demonstrate any clear evidence of presumptive endemic fronts. Looking back to data available from 2012 to 2016 there isn’t any clear evidence of emerging or established infected areas.

In 2012 there was a substantial alpaca breakdown on the eastern side of the county close to West Sussex which was infected with 13:a genotype. The infection was most likely translocated from the HRA of East Sussex when the herd was moved from an area endemic with 13:a. At the destination farm close to the West Sussex border, infection appeared to have transferred to the co-located cattle population through direct or indirect contact. This infection was disclosed in 2014 and a hotspot was put in place which allows increased level of cattle testing where appropriate and survey of ‘found dead badgers’ and deer.

One other genotype was isolated in 2012, 11:a in the north of the county close to the border with Kent and this was associated with purchase of cattle replacements.

In 2013 the only genotype isolate, 10:a, was from an OTFW TB breakdown in the centre of East Sussex, and was associated with purchase of infected cattle.

In 2014 there was an increase in the number of fully confirmed (OTFW) incidents due to two large dairy herds in the centre of the county. The breakdowns disclosed a large number of reactors but only one showed visible lesions at the post mortem examination. The culture results were negative, making it difficult to establish with certainty the source of infection. Also in 2014, a third dairy herd suffered a confirmed incident with a 75:x genotype, the infection being brought in from the heifer rearing unit in Dorset.

The only fully confirmed breakdown in 2015 presented challenges in identifying viable risk pathways more so in the absence of a positive culture result. The breakdown concluded with two short interval tests and the limited number of reactors did not necessarily indicate exposure to infected wildlife.

In 2016 the only confirmed case in the Edge of East Sussex was in a local Approved Finishing Unit (AFU) that purchased restricted cattle from Somerset through a market. The 21:a genotype isolated for this incident confirmed that the incident was of purchased origin.

In the HRA of East Sussex, two genotype endemic areas exist: 13a in the area east of the River Ouse and 9:l (9 cases in last 14 years) west of the river (see embedded picture in the Figure7). The south east corner bordered by the A27 for many years has behaved as an endemic area in the HRA of East Sussex, where occasionally 13:a and 13:c are isolated and farms affected are going seasonally through bTB incidents. While the northern boundary for these genotypes appeared to have been well defined in the past (apart from spread by cattle movements out of the area), in 2010, 13a was isolated for the first time from a cattle herd just north of the previous boundary, the A27 road and the associated railway line.
Figure 7. East Sussex Edge and HRA 13:a and 9:l homeranges in the HRA separated by River Ouse.

In 2014 there were two OTFW cases with 13:a above the A27 and in 2016, one case located north of A27 also showed to have a 13:a genotype infection. The 2016 case is approximately 5km to the Edge Area border presenting potential threat to immediate neighbouring farms as it’s the closest incident to the Edge attributed to infected wildlife that has been recorded between 2010 and 2016. Next year will show whether this area can represent an emerging infected area into the Edge or whether it is only one sporadic incident with no real threat to the Edge.

Figure 8. Progression of endemic fronts of 13:a; 9:l and 13:c in the HRA of East Sussex between 2014-2016
5. Descriptive epidemiology of bovine TB in the Edge Area:

Level of bovine TB

The figures from previous years have changed slightly to allow better comparison with the 2016 figure. The incidence calculation has been amended to ensure reporting of an annual incidence is based on unique herds tested rather than number of herd tests.

Incidence

![Graph showing number of incidents and level of bovine incidence between 2014-2016, Edge, East Sussex]

Figure 9. Number of incidents and level of bovine incidence between 2014-2016, Edge, East Sussex

The probability that a farm will become infected has decreased from 2015 to 2016 and maintained similar levels with the year of 2014. Albeit the numbers of incidents has decreased, there is an ongoing similarity with 2015 regarding the ratio between fully confirmed incidents and strongly suspected ones. If in 2014 the ratio was 50:50, in 2015 and 2016 the ratio was 15:1 and 10:1 respectively, in favour of strongly suspected incidents. This pattern suggests disease is being found earlier in its course, and may also indicate a need to start to consider the possibility that one or two cases may be ‘false positives’ which is consistent with the low prevalence and consequent lower positive predictive value of the skin test compared to higher prevalence areas.

The majority of incidents were resolved within 4-5 months, with the exception of one incident in a dairy herd that took up to 11 months to resolve.

Risk pathways for bTB infection:

For some breakdowns of the East Sussex edge, a most likely risk pathway is unclear especially for those cases where a genotype is not available. In 2016 the only confirmed case in East Sussex was in a local Approved Finishing Unit (AFU) that purchased restricted cattle from Somerset.
trough Frome Market. The 21:a genotype has been isolated twice from the two animals with the same origin in the same month of 2016 from the AFU.

![Pie charts showing sources of infection]

**Figure 10. Sources of infection OTFW cases**

**Figure 11: Sources of infection OTFS cases**

Analysis of source for the ten strongly suspected incidents shows the main two categories as infected cattle movements (4 cases) and uncertainty with an undetermined source of infection (4 cases). The number of incidents with an undetermined source has dropped from 2015, but still significant enough to reflect the lack of a definite genotype to link the incident to a certain location. Some of these incidents might be also attributed to a false positive result, especially in an area with such a low predictive prevalence as Edge of East Sussex.

**Role of other species**

*Badgers and other wildlife*

There is no evidence to date of endemic *M. bovis* infection in the badger population within the Edge Area of East Sussex.

*Role of other domestic species*

In 2016 there has been no evidence of *M. bovis* infection in other domestic species.
The majority of East Sussex Edge breakdowns were detected through routine skin testing, including the majority of the strongly suspected cases. The fully confirmed incident in the AFU was disclosed through slaughterhouse surveillance. In addition to this, one other incident was disclosed through increased surveillance at the six months post breakdown testing.

In 2016 no contiguous testing was carried out (data collected from SPIDA), reflecting the lack of confirmed breakdowns and most likely the lack of secondary spread within the Edge. The number of tracing tests triggered to the whole of East Sussex has also decreased significantly to only 10 tracings tests in 2016, compared to 29 tracings tests carried out in 2015 and 28 tracings tests carried out in 2014.

None of the destination herds of the tracings tests have been found to have been affected with bTB at the date of writing this report. This together with the lack of contiguous testing in the county provides reassurances that in 2016 the cattle to cattle spread of bTB in the Edge of East Sussex was low.

**Burden of bTB bovine**

East Sussex breakdowns are showing an even distribution of breakdowns across the different categories of herd size, despite the predominance of small herds in the population at risk. This reflects the known increased risk associated with larger herd size.
Figure 14. Reactor distribution in 2016 in East Sussex, Edge

The additional gamma test reactors recorded in 2016 and shown in the graph above, relate to a fully confirmed breakdown that started in 2015 but all the testing was carried out in 2016 and to a second breakdown situated on the border between West Sussex and East Sussex that was concluded in 2016 but had significant number of reactors removed through gamma testing.
Key drivers of bovine bTB Epidemic:
The epidemic in East Sussex Edge is apparently reducing and it is hard to assess the source of most of the 2016 cases. Most breakdowns in fattening and suckler small to medium size herds were of undetermined source of infection. The success of detecting disease early has resulted in a lack of genotyping available for the past two years, and so an uncertain situation over the status of the Edge. The low numbers of breakdowns and predominance of suspect rather than confirmed (OTFS versus OTFW) also raises the possibility of false positive results. The scarce cattle densities might mask the spread of bTB between HRA and Edge. County description

The high proportion of breakdowns in East Sussex that do not have genotype information because no M. bovis has been cultured adds significant uncertainty to analysis. However, movement of infected cattle is likely to be the main risk factor associated with breakdowns as evidenced by 4 out of 10 strongly suspected breakdowns and the one fully confirmed breakdown in the county’s only AFU suggesting that OTF status for only the Edge Area part of the county could be achieved by 2025. The incidence of bTB in East Sussex may be slightly increased if the boundaries of the Edge Area are redefined to include all of East Sussex, adding a mean of 9 breakdowns per year to the total incidence (fully confirmed and strongly suspected). Considering the current herd population of the whole of East Sussex (574 herds) and total number of 2016 breakdowns within the Edge Area (11) and HRA (10), a crude estimate of the incidence for the whole county for 2016 would be about 3.7%. This level of incidence is still amongst the lowest of Edge Area and HRA counties.

6. Summary of risks for spread of TB in East Sussex Edge

Summary of the risk to the Low Risk Area (LRA) and any mitigating factors:

In the neighbouring LRA several breakdowns of 13:a occurred since 2014 in West Sussex, but epidemiological investigations have demonstrated that all incidents were related to movements of infected cattle and carcases into West Sussex and were not spread through movements of infected wildlife. Also considering the distribution of 13:a genotype, on the eastern side of the River Ouse, it would be expected to find an expansion of the 9:l genotype towards the west and into the LRA of West Sussex and not 13:a. Figure 7 above confirms that distribution of genotypes has not changed during the years and the adjacent LRA is not threatened at the moment. The spread of disease towards the LRA border is also mitigated by the low cattle density in the area. An additional mitigation that can further reduce the risk to West Sussex is the introduction of the Post Movement Testing as a mandatory test for all the animals moved from HRA into the LRA.

It remains to be seen what impact the new rules of holding registration under CPH England will have, but farmers with permanent CPH between LRA and HRA can merge them under the new rules if within less 10 miles between them. This might affect the overall management of various cases.

Summary of the risk to the Edge Area from the HRA

The risk of disease spread from HRA to the Edge seems higher than the risk posed to LRA however there is no clear evidence that the endemic front has progressed enough to pose a threat.
The HRA of East Sussex has been stable for years with 2-3 OTFW breakdowns per year within the South Downs. The genotype 13:a or 9:l has not been isolated from any breakdown in the Edge of East Sussex for at least 4 years (since 2012).

There are two major roads acting as natural barriers, A27 bordering the South Downs and the true endemic area of HRA, potentially acting as a mitigating factor and A22 that mostly reflects the Edge border. Recent mapping of all cases in HRA showed that in addition to a previous incident disclosed in 2010 and mentioned above in this report, there are two consecutive 13:a incidents attributed to infected badgers also located above A27 and disclosed in 2014, and a fourth incident disclosed 5km away from the Edge border. The incidents situated north of A27 and the one badger culture sampled in 2010 also located above A27, demonstrate that the A27 does not act as a physical barrier to migration of infected wildlife toward the Edge.

7. **Assessment of effectiveness of controls and forward look**

Incidents are randomly spread in the Edge Area of East Sussex, with uncertainty as to how disease has been sourced. There is no evidence to date of endemic *M. bovis* infection in the badger population within the Edge Area of East Sussex.

The farm-level TB portfolio reports have proved to be very useful for farmers and private vets to learn about their local bTB situations and to be proactive in improving biosecurity on their farms during breakdowns.
8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview of risk and surveillance areas of England and Edge Area objectives and controls

Figure A1: Bovine TB risk and surveillance areas of England (effective since January 2013) as set out in the strategy for achieving Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free status for England

1.1 Policy objectives for the Edge Area:

Short to medium term:
- slow down geographic spread
- maintain crude herd incidence of OTFW breakdowns <2% overall by 2019
- begin to reduce the incidence rate

Longer term:
- reduce geographic spread of bTB and push the Edge Area boundaries westward
- reduce OTFW herd incidence to <1% by 2025
- attain OTF status (incidence of indigenous OTFW herd breakdowns <0.1) for the lowest incidence counties in the Edge Area.
1.2 Key Control Measures

Surveillance

- enhanced herd test coverage (annual)
- extend targeted surveillance to 3km around new OTFW breakdowns in Cheshire and Derbyshire (radial testing), with six month follow-up
- possible RTA badger survey

Management of cases ('breakdowns')

- increased sensitivity of breakdown herd testing:
  - OTFS breakdowns to pass two short interval tests at severe interpretation to regain OTF status
  - mandatory IFN-g parallel testing in OTFW
  - enhanced epidemiological investigation and data analysis
  - information sharing - location of breakdown herds

Appendix 2: Cattle industry in the Edge and HRA of East Sussex Area of the region

Table A2.1. Number of cattle premises by size band in the whole county of East Sussex at 1 January 2015

(RADAR Cattle book 2008 (or most current update))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cattle per premises</th>
<th>1-50</th>
<th>51-100</th>
<th>101-200</th>
<th>201-350</th>
<th>351-500</th>
<th>501+</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of premises</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of Approved Finishing Units (AFUs) registered in the Region’s Edge Area: One AFU registered in East Sussex.

Common land in the County or Counties: No common land registered in East Sussex

Table A2.2. Cattle/herd purpose:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Beef</th>
<th>Dairy</th>
<th>Dual purpose</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>29473</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>14714</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>1360</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 3: Summary of the Edge Area regional headline cattle TB statistics

#### Table A3.1. Herd-level statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Herd-level statistics</th>
<th>East Sussex (Edge only) 2016</th>
<th>East Sussex (Edge only) 2015</th>
<th>East Sussex (Edge only) 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Total number of cattle herds live on Sam at the end of the reporting period</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>498</td>
<td>508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Total number of herd tests carried out in the period</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Total number of OTF cattle herds TB tested during the period for any reason</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Total number of OTF cattle herds at the end of the report period (i.e. herds not under any type of TB02 restrictions)</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>486</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Total number of cattle herds that were not under restrictions due to an ongoing TB breakdown at the end of the report period.</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Total number of new TB breakdowns detected in cattle herds during the report period</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• OTF status suspended (OTF-S)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• OTF status withdrawn (OTF-W)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Of the OTF-W herd breakdowns:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• How many can be considered the result of movement, purchase or contact from/with an existing breakdown based on current evidence?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New OTF-W breakdowns triggered by skin test reactors or 2xIRs at routine herd tests</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New OTF-W breakdowns triggered by skin test reactors or 2xIRs at other TB test types (forward and back-tracings, contiguous, check tests, etc.)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New OTF-W breakdowns first detected through</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A3.2. Animal-level statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal-level statistics (cattle)</th>
<th>33933</th>
<th>33274</th>
<th>33640</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Total number of cattle tested in the period (animal tests)</td>
<td>33933</td>
<td>33274</td>
<td>33640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Reactors detected:</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• tuberculin skin test</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• additional IFN-gamma blood test reactors (skin-test negative or IR animals)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Reactors per breakdown</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>6.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Reactors per 1000 animal tests</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>1.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Additional animals identified for slaughter for TB control reasons (DCs, including any first-time IRs)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. SLH cases (tuberculous carcases) reported by FSA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. SLH cases confirmed by culture of <em>M. bovis</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Suspected sources of *M. bovis* infection for all the new OTF-W breakdowns identified in the report period

Table A4. Suspected sources of *M. bovis* infection for all the new OTF-W breakdowns identified in the report period

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Most likely origin</th>
<th>East Sussex</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prov.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction (e.g. purchase) of infected animal(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local - lateral spread from neighbouring holdings</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• exposure to infected wildlife</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• other farmed species</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recrudescence of residual infection from a previous TB breakdown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• infected human source</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undetermined/obscure</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (explain)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Categorisation all new OTFW TB breakdowns identified using the following risk matrix, according to (a) the probability of them being the result of introduced infection (inward cattle movements) and (b) the strength of evidence that we are dealing with an isolated incident without further propagation from the index farm to neighbouring herds (or vice versa).
East Sussex:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Probability of introduced <em>M. bovis</em> infection</th>
<th>Probability of isolated, sporadic ('one-off') breakdown, without secondary cattle to cattle spread</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definite</td>
<td>Likely (no secondary breakdowns detected)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Possible (no secondary breakdowns detected, but dataset incomplete)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>Not likely (secondary spread has occurred)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not likely (indigenous infection in the locality)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.