2019 TB Testing Intervals Policy (England)

December 2018

Principles that apply in 2019:

1. TB testing intervals are based on the regional level of disease risk.

2. Default routine testing frequencies will be generally applied to whole counties, the exceptions are Derbyshire, Hampshire and Berkshire where there will be areas of annual and of six-monthly testing. Parishes are only used to ensure tests are evenly distributed throughout the four years of the TB testing cycle in the four yearly testing area (see ‘temporal smoothing’ below).

3. Whole counties in the South West of England and the West Midlands (Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, Dorset, Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Worcestershire, Herefordshire, West Midlands, Staffordshire, and Shropshire) remain on annual TB testing, on the basis that this represents the High Risk Area (HRA) in England.

4. Since 1st April 2017, supplementary interferon-gamma blood testing is compulsory for TB breakdown herds with lesion and/or culture positive animals in the High Risk Area (HRA) of England that satisfy certain criteria. For more information see: http://www.tbhub.co.uk/guidance/testing-and-compensation/cattle-interferon-gamma-ifn%ce%b3-testing-bovine-tuberculosis/

5. Additionally, some counties which are at risk of geographic spread of disease in the short to medium term have also been placed on annual or six-monthly testing and constitute the TB Edge Area of England:
   - **six monthly testing** in the whole of Cheshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire and parts of Derbyshire (West), Berkshire (West) and Hampshire (North West). **From May 2019** cattle herds in these parts of the Edge Area will be eligible for annual surveillance testing if they meet either of the following criteria:
     - the herd has been in existence for at least six years and has not had a TB breakdown in that six year period. A single break from keeping cattle of less than four months during the six year period is permitted
     - the herd is registered to a bovine TB health scheme accredited under the Cattle Health Certification Standards (CHeCS) at level 1 or above
   - **annual testing** in all other parts of the new Edge Area (i.e. Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex and remaining parts of Derbyshire, Berkshire and Hampshire) supplemented with radial testing around lesion and/or culture positive TB breakdowns. This radial testing will consist 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.

---

1 The list of parishes on six-monthly and annual testing in the counties of Derbyshire, Berkshire and Hampshire can be found on the 2019 Testing Intervals site at the GOV.UK website.

2 Full details available on the TB hub.
6. The objective of this enhanced testing surveillance is to speed up the detection of infected herds in this area of increasing incidence in order to achieve OTF status for the counties that make up the Edge Area as soon as possible.

7. The rest of the North and East of England (Low risk Area or LRA), 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. The LRA covers the counties of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Cleveland, County Durham, Cumbria, Essex, Greater London, Greater Manchester, Hertfordshire, Humberside, Isle of Wight, Isles of Scilly, Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Norfolk, Northumberland, North, South and West Yorkshire, Suffolk, Surrey, Tyne and Wear and West Sussex.

8. Defra has demonstrated that the majority of lesion and/or culture positive TB breakdowns in four yearly tested areas can be attributed directly to movements of infected cattle from the endemic TB areas in England and Wales without further consequences for other cattle herds in the locality. No geographical changes to the Low Risk Area (LRA) will occur in 2019.

9. However any individual herds in the four yearly testing LRA 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 or more frequent testing. This includes:
   - herds at risk because of management practices. This will affect herds such as bull hirers, producer retailers of raw milk, and herds with high risk trading practices
   - breakdown herds, or herds that have regained OTF status but still require a post breakdown testing regime, or
   - herds that fall within (or straddle) a 3km radius circle from an lesion and/or culture positive TB breakdown, or are considered to be epidemiologically relevant to that breakdown, will be subject to an immediate herd test of all the cattle on the premises aged six weeks or older. This will be followed by additional check tests at six and 12 months. If this enhanced surveillance fails to detect further evidence of infection in the vicinity of an lesion or culture positive TB breakdown, the herds will revert to background four yearly testing
   - APHA also retains the discretion to shorten herd testing intervals in response to changes in the local disease situation e.g. herds in the East Cumbria TB hotspot placed on six-monthly testing

10. 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.

11. Interferon-gamma blood testing will continue to apply in lesion and/or culture positive TB breakdowns in the Low Risk and Edge Areas.

12. Compulsory post-movement testing of cattle entering the LRA of England from annual or more frequent TB testing areas of GB came into force on 6 April 2016 (a small number of exemptions apply). The aim of the post-movement testing policy is to further reduce the risk of introducing TB infected cattle into the LRA thereby supporting our objective of securing Officially TB free status for this part of the country.

13. For the whole of England, forward and back tracings are required on animals from lesion and/or culture-positive TB breakdowns and mandatory pre-movement testing of cattle in annually and more frequent tested herds continues, subject to certain exemptions.

TB Programme Defra
December 2018