2020 surveillance TB testing intervals policy (England)

Principles that apply in 2020:

1. TB testing intervals are based on the regional level of bovine TB risk.
2. Default routine surveillance testing frequencies are generally applied to whole counties, except in the Edge Area counties of Derbyshire, Hampshire and Berkshire where there is annual and six-monthly testing in different parts of the counties. 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 (refer to '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. Default six-monthly surveillance testing of cattle herds, with lower risk herds remaining in annual testing, will be introduced in the HRA of England on a phased approach during 2020, more information will be made available in due course.
4. Additionally, some counties which are at risk of geographic spread of bovine TB in the short to medium term are placed on annual or six monthly surveillance 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). Some cattle herds in these parts of the Edge Area are 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 Edge Area (i.e. Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Buckinghamshire, East Sussex and remaining parts Error! Bookmark not defined. of Derbyshire, Berkshire and Hampshire) supplemented with radial testing around lesion and/or culture positive TB breakdowns. This radial testing consists 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.
5. The objective of this enhanced surveillance testing is to speed up the detection of infected herds in this area of increasing incidence.
6. 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, 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.
7. 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 undetected 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.

8. 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) are placed on annual or more frequent testing. This includes:
   - herds at risk because of management practices. This affects 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, are subject to an immediate herd test of all the cattle on the premises aged six weeks or older. This is 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

9. 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 incidence areas, the routine testing of herds in the four yearly testing area is 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. Mandatory interferon-gamma blood testing continues to apply in all new lesion and/or culture positive TB breakdowns in the Low Risk and Edge Areas.

12. All keepers of cattle herds on an annual or more frequent testing interval must also comply with statutory pre-movement testing requirements, unless an exemption applies to the animal being moved or the type of movement. This includes herds in the LRA that are tested more frequently than the default 48 month interval as per paragraph 8 above.

13. For the whole of England, forward and backward tracings tests are required on animals from lesion and/or culture-positive TB breakdowns.

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