

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Changes to testing requirements in non-grazing Approved Finishing Units (AFUs) in England

Bovine TB Information Note 02/13

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What is an AFU? Will the changes affect you?

Approved Finishing Units (AFUs) are licensed by the Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratory Agency (AHVLA) to provide an outlet for the fattening and/or finishing of cattle that have recently been tested for TB with negative results from farms which lack such facilities. This includes clear TB tested cattle from farms under TB restrictions. Industry feedback has shown that AFUs are an important trade outlet for TB affected businesses.

As cattle kept in AFUs can only go to slaughter, there are increased levels and frequency of slaughterhouse TB surveillance in these units compared to the majority of cattle herds. AFU licensing and operating rules are tightly prescribed, including high biosecurity standards and permanent movement restrictions in place. Compliance with operating rules is closely monitored.

There are two types of AFUs:

- **'Grazing' AFUs**, which include double-fenced grazing land and can only be established in high TB incidence areas where infected wildlife is a known problem;
- **'Non-grazing' AFUs**, where cattle are always held indoors in wildlife-proofed housing.

The changes described below affect non-grazing AFU operators and those operators who move cattle between AFUs.

What is changing?

In line with our commitment to monitor the testing burden on farm businesses, from 1 June 2013 we will:

- **Cease mandatory, and Defra funded, routine testing for TB within non-grazing AFUs in England.**
- **Cease government funded breakdown testing in non-grazing AFUs in England, except in exceptional circumstances** (e.g. if evidence of an extensive TB problem is identified in groups of cattle sent to slaughter)

What will you need to do and when?

Affected farmers should ensure they understand the TB testing changes and make adjustments to their business if necessary. Defra has written to all licensed AFU operators in England before the changes come into operation.

If you are thinking of setting up an AFU you will need to consider the implications of these changes. Options:

- **If you are in a High Risk Area (in an annual TB testing area), you may apply to set up a grazing or non-grazing AFU.**
- **If you are in a Low Risk Area (in a four-yearly TB testing area), you can apply to set up a non-grazing AFU only.**

You can check your testing intervals by entering the CPH numbers on the AHVLA website: <http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/tb-test/index.asp>.

If you require further advice or guidance and/or if you are thinking of setting up a new AFU please contact your local AHVLA office.

Why make changes?

Reducing the TB testing burden within non-grazing AFUs will help rural businesses and reduce government costs without compromising the TB control and eradication framework. We have committed to striking a balance between ensuring robust disease controls and helping to support a viable cattle farming industry¹. Our veterinary risk assessment indicates that as the units are bio-secure and the cattle go directly to slaughter there is no increased disease risk by removing such testing.

Q&A

How will I know if this impacts me?

Defra has written to all licensed AFU operators in England to provide information on how the change might impact on them.

If you are thinking of applying for an AFU licence, you should discuss your options and the operating requirements with your local AHVLA office. What kind of AFU you can operate depends on the TB testing interval of the area your holdings are in and the incidence of TB.

¹ See paragraph 39 'Reducing Burdens' (page 28) of the Bovine TB Eradication Programme for England which can be found on Defra's website: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/07/19/pb13601-bovine-tb-eradication-programme/>

I have a non-grazing AFU – what happens next?

From 1 June 2013, there is no longer a requirement to carry out 6-monthly routine TB testing and AHVLA will contact you to discuss cancelling any scheduled tests.

However, AHVLA will retain the discretion to carry out testing in non-grazing AFUs in exceptional circumstances, such as:

- extensive evidence of TB identified at the slaughterhouse
- an extensive TB breakdown on a neighbouring farm
- suspicion of clinical TB cases in animals held in the AFU

These examples are not exhaustive: the option to test in exceptional circumstances will be informed by AHVLA veterinary risk assessments, taking into account the local disease situation and other factors.

I have a grazing AFU – am I affected?

You will not be affected by the decision to reduce testing as this only applies to non-grazing AFUs. Your routine TB testing schedule remains at 90 days. AHVLA will continue to notify you about your testing dates.

I have a holding in the Low Risk Area, and wish to apply for an AFU licence. What should I do?

You can apply to set up a non-grazing AFU only. There are strict pre-conditions and operating rules, which you will need to discuss with your local AHVLA office.

You can view the terms and conditions for AFUs on the AHVLA website:

- Non-grazing AFUs (England): <http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/form/tb130e/>

I have a holding in the High Risk Area, and wish to apply for an AFU licence. How am I affected by the changes?

You can apply to set up either a grazing or non-grazing AFU, subject to your application being approved by AHVLA. There are strict pre-conditions and operating rules, which you will need to discuss with your local AHVLA office.

You can view the terms and conditions for AFUs on the AHVLA website:

- Grazing AFUs (England): <http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/form/tb131e/>

- Non-grazing AFUs (England): <http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/form/tb130e/>

Contacts

If you have any detailed questions on these changes please contact one of the following:

Your **local AHVLA office**: you can find details here:

<http://ahvla.defra.gov.uk/postcode/index.asp>

Defra Helpline: 08459 33 55 77 (Mon-Fri 8am-6pm)

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This document/publication is also available on our website at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/animal-diseases/a-z/bovine-tb/>

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