



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

12<sup>th</sup> August 2013

**Letter to cattle keepers re the edge area**

Dear [cattle keeper's name]

**Strategy for Achieving “Officially Bovine Tuberculosis Free” Status for England: an ‘edge area’ strategy**

Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) is the most pressing animal health problem in the UK. It threatens cattle keepers’ livelihoods and our farming industry as well as the health of wildlife and livestock. The Government and the wider farming industry agree that we must all work together if we are to tackle the disease effectively.

As you may have seen, the Government has launched a consultation on the 4<sup>th</sup> July on a new draft strategy for achieving Officially bTB Free (OTF) status for the whole of England within 25 years. The draft strategy can be found here -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strategy-for-achieving-officially-bovine-tuberculosis-free-status-for-england> .

One of the main changes is that the draft strategy includes specific packages of measures to address the TB risk in different geographical areas. These are called the “Low Risk Area” (the current four-yearly tested area), the “High Risk Area” and the “Edge Area” (currently both on annual testing).

The ‘edge’ is a geographical area at the edge of the current annual testing area where we do not have evidence that bTB is endemic but where infection is either currently spreading or which is at risk of disease spread in the short to medium term.

The objective of the Edge Area strategy is to focus effort on containing and then reversing the spread of bTB to achieve OTF status. We are therefore rolling out additional cattle measures now ahead of the rest of the strategy as there is an urgent need to stop the spread of the disease.

It consists of some entire counties (Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire and Hampshire) and some part-counties (Cheshire, Derbyshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and East Sussex).



We are writing to you now as this holding is either located in or linked to a holding in the edge area. We have included with this letter an information note that gives you further details about the additional testing and control measures that we are applying to bTB breakdowns in the edge area.

From 12<sup>th</sup> August cattle keepers are not able to establish CTS links where one holding is in the edge area and another holding is in a different TB risk area.

Being in the edge area does not mean that we consider your holding to be a high risk just because of where your holding is located. Each holding has different levels of risk depending on a range of factors such as trading patterns, biosecurity arrangements and the local disease situation. However there is a risk that your holding could be affected by disease spread in the short to medium term.

There are a number of things that you can do to help minimise the risks of getting TB on your holding. We therefore urge you to think about and discuss with your vet how you can improve the biosecurity on your holding. Other things to consider are making sure that you continue to test on time and to look at the risks of the stock you are buying or moving onto your holding. There is also advice available on the AHVLA website - <http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/category/publications/advice-guide/btb/> .

One of the key parts of the edge area strategy is to give you more information about the disease situation in your area. To start with, we have attached to this letter a map of showing the distribution of TB breakdowns throughout the edge area. In some areas, it is clear that there is a significant problem (e.g. in Cheshire and Derbyshire). There is a real risk that if we do not take action now then disease will spread and could become endemic, which will be much harder to tackle.

We will provide regular updates on progress in tackling the disease.

To give you further information on the edge area strategy there will be a series of workshops run by an independent company later in the year. Look out for further details of these in the farming press and in your local vet practice.

Defra is also working with the farming industry to introduce risk-based trading to help them make more informed decisions about the cattle they buy.

If you have any further questions on what these changes mean for you, please contact your local AHVLA office or discuss further with your OV. If you have any questions about the CTS links changes, please contact BCMS.

Although we need to roll out additional cattle measures in the Edge Area now, we do want to hear your views about the wider strategy for making England Officially TB Free in 25 years. The strategy sets out action in areas such as disease surveillance, pre- and post-movement cattle testing, removal of cattle exposed to bTB, tracing the potential source of infection and wildlife controls including culling and vaccination trials. It also focuses on the development of new techniques such as badger and cattle vaccines and new diagnostic tests that could one day offer new ways of tackling the disease.



You can give us your views either:

**Online** by completing the questionnaire at <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/>

**Email** to [BTBengage@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:BTBengage@defra.gsi.gov.uk)

**Post** to:

TB Strategy Consultation  
Area 5D, Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR

The deadline for responses is **Thursday, 26 September 2013**.

Bovine TB Programme,

Defra

