

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Changes to TB Cattle Movement Controls – ending the practice of de-restricting parts of TB-restricted holdings

Bovine TB information note 02/14

June 2014

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Introduction

Bovine TB is the most pressing animal health problem facing our cattle farmers. The crisis facing cattle farmers, their families and their communities cannot be overstated. It is a devastating disease that threatens our cattle industry and presents risks to other livestock, wildlife species such as badgers, domestic pets and humans. As part of the Government's aim of achieving Officially Tuberculosis Free status for England, we need to develop new measures to deal effectively with the disease.

What are partial de-restrictions?

Cattle herds are placed under movement restrictions (thereby losing their Officially TB Free (OTF) status) when test positive animals are disclosed through TB testing on the farm, through the identification of TB lesions at routine post-mortem meat inspection and when TB herd testing becomes overdue.

For disease control reasons, negative-testing cattle from TB-restricted herds can only be moved:

- directly to slaughter;
- to other TB-restricted herds (subject to a satisfactory risk assessment); or
- to AHVLA-approved finishing units (AFUs) where the cattle are reared and fattened for slaughter. Cattle from TB-restricted herds cannot be moved to OTF herds.

Partial de-restrictions of holdings suffering a TB breakdown have been allowed in some instances, meaning that separate groups of cattle can be tested clear ahead of the rest of the herd. Negative-testing cattle in the de-restricted part of the holding may then be freely traded.

What is changing?

From the **1st October 2014** AHVLA will no longer allow the partial de-restriction of TB-breakdown holdings. From that date movement restrictions will apply to all cattle on the holding (CPH) for the duration of the breakdown i.e. until all the animals have achieved OTF status and the restrictions are lifted on the CPH.

Why is this policy change being made?

As cattle movements are one cause of TB spread, it is important that there are appropriate controls on movements from one herd to another. There is evidence that holdings that have been partially de-restricted have a disproportionate number of further TB

breakdowns, which supports the concern that the practice is unhelpful from a disease control perspective.

It is also difficult for potential buyers of stock and for enforcement authorities to audit the movements between the different groups to make sure that only the negative-testing groups of cattle are released from restrictions and that movements between the separate parts of the holding do not take place.

For these reasons, the Secretary of State has given a commitment to the European Commission to end this practice by the end of September 2014.

Are there any business mitigating options for cattle keepers?

As these changes may have a material impact on some cattle keepers, you may wish to consider the following possible options:

- i. Negative-testing cattle from TB-restricted holdings can be moved (as now) to **Approved Finishing Units** to be reared or finished for slaughter. They can also be sold directly to slaughterhouses and, subject to a satisfactory veterinary risk assessment, moved to other TB-restricted herds.
- ii. Cattle keepers may be able to mitigate the potential impact of a future TB breakdown by **registering epidemiologically separate parts of their enterprise to one or more new CPHs if they currently are under one CPH for administrative purposes**. This option obviously requires that the separate parts are truly epidemiologically separate i.e. with separate management and equipment and limited frequency of cattle movements between the groups. If TB is disclosed in just one of the groups the number of cattle subject to movement restrictions would therefore be limited to that group. Guidance is attached for cattle keepers to understand whether a separate CPH might be appropriate.
- iii. The setting up of a **TB isolation unit**, but such units must be registered under a separate CPH and approved by AHVLA (see below).

TB isolation units

TB affected cattle keepers can send groups of cattle from their herd to a TB isolation unit. Once they have passed the required tests, TB restrictions on these animals are lifted. AHVLA will continue to approve TB isolation units as now, provided all conditions are fully met. However in future these units will need to be registered as a new CPH and must be separate from the remainder of the existing holding.

The approval of existing TB isolation units not registered to a separate CPH will lapse on the lifting of restrictions on any animals in them as at 30th September 2014. They would then need to be approved under the new rules – including the requirement for a separate CPH.

How will we communicate these changes?

We have issued this Information Note now to give as much notice as possible to affected organisations and individuals. For any further information on these changes, please contact your local AHVLA Office.

Q&A

1. My herd is already partially de-restricted, will that still be the case after 1st October 2014?

Yes. AHVLA will honour decisions, made before 1st October 2014, to partially de-restrict existing TB affected herds.

2. Will I be able to apply for a partial de-restriction if I have a breakdown before the end of September 2014?

No new TB breakdowns arising between now and the end of September 2014 will be considered for partial de-restriction as the cattle could not achieve the necessary two consecutive clear tests before that date.

3. Can I set up a new CPH whilst my holding is TB-restricted?

No. New CPHs cannot be set up whilst the herd/holding is under restriction. Cattle keepers are encouraged to consider doing this **before** a TB breakdown.

4. What do you mean by separate epidemiological units?

Separate epidemiological units mean that there is a reduced risk of disease transmission between the units. For example, separate units do not share management or equipment, and have a limited number of cattle movements between them. Separate CPHs for separate epidemiological units strengthen this separation by providing for movement recording and pre-movement testing. It is important to note that, in the event of a TB breakdown, restrictions could still be applied to the new CPH if AHVLA consider that there is not sufficient separation. This would reduce the benefit of creating a new CPH, particularly in cases where regular cattle movements between the separate units take place. Some further suggestions for you to consider are attached in the Annex.

5. Should I contact RPA first to set up a new CPH?

We would advise you to contact AHVLA in the first instance if you are considering setting up a new CPH for part of an existing holding to mitigate the possible impacts on your business in the event of a TB breakdown. This will help give you an indication whether AHVLA consider that there is sufficient separation in the proposed arrangements. You should then contact RPA to set up the new CPH.

Annex – Guidance on issues for cattle keepers to consider in setting up new CPHs

Cattle keepers who wish to consider whether additional CPHs are appropriate in order to minimise the risks to their business in the event of a TB breakdown are advised to discuss with AHVLA and think about the following questions:

- Would there be sufficient separation from other parts of the current holding to justify having two CPHs? For example:
 - Would the new CPH be a distinct parcel (or parcels) of land, separate from other parts of the other CPH?
 - Is there adequate separation that will prevent nose-to-nose contact with other stock (e.g. natural barriers, double fencing etc.) and indirect contact via people, equipment and machinery?
 - Would there be separate handling, feed and water management and appropriate distance separation from other animals?
 - Separate facilities should be used for each CPH, so you would need to use separate milking parlours.
- Cattle keepers should consider whether any new CPH straddles different TB risk areas. If so, the stricter of the risk area rules will apply to all parts of the new CPH.
- Where new CPHs are created, they cannot then be re-associated through Sole Occupancy Authorities (SOAs) or CTS links. Movement reporting, standstills and, in annual-testing areas, pre-movement testing would apply to moves between them. How would this affect the business?

Cattle keepers should discuss these CPH options with their local AHVLA office before contacting RPA to make the change. Cattle keepers should also consider discussing with their own vets, to determine whether a new CPH is appropriate.

It is important to note that despite there being separate CPHs, AHVLA may apply restrictions or additional actions in the event of a TB breakdown beyond the CPH where the suspect animal was located, if there is evidence to do so (e.g. that the CPHs are not truly separate either by distance or because there are movements between the two). If cattle keepers do not feel that a new CPH would meet these suggestions, there are still options available to them if the herd suffers a TB breakdown:

- Movements can be licensed by AHVLA in exceptional circumstances, e.g. where there are welfare concerns regarding overstocking.
- There are trading options available for TB-restricted holdings through the use of AFUs.
- The establishment of isolation units on a different holding

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs/series/bovine-tb-information-notes>

PB 14178