



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Our ref: RFI 7194

Date: 16 February 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION: Incidence of TB in Cattle Reactors

Thank you for your request for information, which we received on 26 January, about the incidence of TB in cattle. We have handled your request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Your questions and the responses are below.

1) How many Cattle were compulsorily slaughtered as TB reactors in England in 2011, 2012 & 2013?

The information that you have requested above can be found at the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/incidence-of-tuberculosis-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain>

and by opening the MS Excel spreadsheet entitled 'Incidence of TB in cattle in Great Britain – regional dataset'.

As the information is reasonably accessible to you by other means, it is exempt from disclosure under section 21 FOIA.

2) How many of these TB reactors were inspected for clinical symptoms, visible lesions or otherwise, of TB at post-mortem in 2011, 2012 & 2013?

And

3) How many of these TB reactors were found to contain clinical signs, visible lesions or otherwise, of TB at post-mortem in 2011, 2012 & 2013?

And

4) How many of these TB reactors were actually found to be 'TB Free' at post-mortem in 2011, 2012 & 2013?

All cattle slaughtered in abattoirs in Great Britain (including TB test reactors) are inspected for visible lesions of TB by meat inspectors and official veterinarians from the Food Standards Agency (FSA) as a food hygiene protection measure. They also record the



post-mortem findings and, where necessary, collect tissue samples for bacteriological culture in a laboratory of the Animal and Plant and Health Agency (APHA).

You should refer to figure 6.4 and table 6.5 in the 2013 Annual bTB Surveillance Report for England (link below), which shows the monthly proportion of skin and IFN-gamma test reactors slaughtered in England that had demonstrable evidence of TB at PM examination or bacteriological culture.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/388679/tb-pub-surveport-eng13.pdf

The percentage has remained around 50-60% for the last four years or so. However, this result does not mean that the other 40-50% of test reactors with no visible TB lesions were not infected with *Mycobacterium bovis* at the point of slaughter. Post-mortem inspection of cattle carried out under commercial conditions in a slaughterhouse, which do not indicate the presence of visible lesions, do not 'prove' that reactor animals are free of TB, since lesions may not become visible to the naked eye until relatively late in the disease. As a result, animals with early and latent TB infections may react to the skin test while the lesions are too small to see.

In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA and the government's Transparency Agenda, all information is assumed to be releasable to the public unless exempt. Therefore, the information released to you will now be published on www.gov.uk together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. Please note that this will not include your personal data.

I attach an annex giving contact details should you be unhappy with the service that you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter please contact the address below.

Yours sincerely,


Defra FOIA and EIRs Team
InformationRequests@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Annex

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the service you have received in relation to your request you may make a complaint or appeal against our decision under section 17(7) of the FOIA or under regulation 18 of the EIRs, as applicable, within 40 working days of the date of this letter. Please write to [REDACTED] Head of Information Standards, Area 4D, Nobel House, 17 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3JR (email: requestforinfo@defra.gsi.gov.uk) and he will arrange for an internal review of your case. Details of Defra's complaints procedure are on our [website](#).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, section 50 of the FOIA and regulation 18 of the EIRs gives you the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Please note that generally the Information Commissioner cannot make a decision unless you have first exhausted Defra's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF