



Animal &
Plant Health
Agency

Animal and Plant Health Agency
Access to Information Team
Weybourne Building
Ground Floor
Woodham Lane
New Haw
Addlestone
Surrey
KT15 3NB

F 01932 357608

www.gov.uk/apha

[REDACTED]
{By Email}

Our Ref: ATIC1252

2 March 2018

Dear Mr [REDACTED]

PROVISION OF REQUESTED INFORMATION

Thank you for your request for information which we received on 2 February 2018. Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

The information you requested and our response is detailed below:

"I am writing to request information under the Freedom of Information Act on the extent of mycoplasma in UK cattle herds.

1. How many confirmed cases of mycoplasma have been recorded in the UK since 2006 (table 1 & 3)? Of these, how many were single strains of multiple infections of different strains. Could you please provide a detailed breakdown of different types of mycoplasma infection.

Data for 2006 to 2015 has previously been requested from APHA and is published here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508811/ATIC0815.pdf

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

Please see Tables 1 and 2 for the requested data from 2015-2017.

These figures indicate diagnosis of Mycoplasma from England and Wales at APHA. Figures are for submissions received from APHA's regional laboratory network. Samples originating from farms in England and Wales may have been tested by non-APHA laboratories, such as Scottish Agricultural College and private laboratories.

Mycoplasma species (number and %) identified from cattle samples submitted from APHA laboratories in England and Wales for mycoplasma diagnosis from years 2016 and 2017 is provided in Table 1. Note that these numbers are unconfirmed. This is additional to the data from 2006 to 2015 which is already available from a previous request, but which is included in the overall numbers shown here.

Table 1. Mycoplasma antigen detection from APHA laboratory submissions from England and Wales

No. of Mycoplasma identifications	2016-2017		overall 2006-2017*	
	number	%	number	%
<i>M. bovis</i>	202	33.2	915	30.9
<i>M. alkalescens</i>	81	13.3	505	17
<i>M. arginini</i>	55	9	203	6.8
<i>M. bovirhinis</i>	77	12.6	609	20.5
<i>M. bovoculi</i>	0	0	5	0.16
<i>M. bovis genitalium</i>	1	0.2	6	0.2
<i>M. canis</i>	23	3.8	141	4.8
<i>M. canadense</i>	12	2	61	2.1
<i>M. dispar</i>	102	16.7	298	10.1
<i>M. wenyonii</i> **	18	3	126	4.2

<i>Candidatus M. haemobos</i>	1	0.2	15	0.5
<i>M. californicum</i>	1	0.2	1	0.03
<i>Ureaplasma diversum</i>	32	5.3	74	2.5
<i>Acholeplasma granularum</i>	0	0	2	0.07
<i>Achoeplasma laidlawii</i>	4	0.7	4	0.1
Totals	609		2965	

* data from 2006-2015 provided in response to a previous freedom of information request

** usually only detected from blood samples, so very specific testing.

Multiple *Mycoplasma* sp. identifications may be identified from some samples. Information on multiple species identifications has been previously provided for respiratory samples from which *M. bovis* was identified over a 30 month period (October 2012 to April 2015).

Between April 2015 and December 2017 there were a total of 20 different combinations of mycoplasmas identified where *M. bovis* diagnosed from APHA laboratory submissions from cattle from England and Wales. This includes all submissions and not only those associated with respiratory disease and is unconfirmed data. When considering all *Mycoplasma* (plus *Acholeplasma laidlawii* and *Ureaplasma diversum*) diagnoses there were 59 combinations identified. The most commonly observed mixed infections included *M. bovis* and *M. alkalescens* (7% of all APHA cattle samples for which mycoplasma was identified), *M. bovis* and *M. arginini* (5.4%) *M. bovis* and *M. bovirhinis* (3.1%), *M. bovis* and *M. dispar* (2.9%), *M. dispar* and *M. bovirhinis* (2.9%). A summary of this data is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of multiple infections identified from APHA samples from England and Wales between April 2015 and December 2017

Cattle: <i>M. bovis</i> identified		Cattle: including all mycoplasmas	
no. of infections	no. of samples	no. of infections	no. of samples
1	131	1	314
2	106	2	162
3	22	3	36
4	3	4	4
5	0	5	1
Total	262	Total	517

A detailed breakdown of the different types of mycoplasma infections has previously been requested from APHA and is published here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508811/ATIC0815.pdf

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

Additional and supplementary information is also available in the public domain. Veterinary Investigation Diagnosis Analysis (VIDA) data is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/veterinary-investigation-diagnosis-analysis-vida-report-2015>

The last available report is for 2015.

Disease surveillance dashboards which are publicly accessible have been developed to facilitating the sharing of surveillance information that is gathered from submissions to the Great Britain veterinary diagnostic network which includes:

APHA's Veterinary Investigation Centres in England and Wales, Scotland's Rural College Disease Surveillance Centres in Scotland operated by SAC Consulting Veterinary Services and APHA's network of universities and other partners who provide post mortem examination services under contract.

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/siu.apha#!/vizhome/CattleDashboard/CattleDashboard>

Links to Quarterly cattle surveillance and emerging threats reports are available at:

<http://apha.defra.gov.uk/vet-gateway/surveillance/seg/cattle.htm>

With the emerging threats reports found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cattle-disease-surveillance-reports-2017>

2. How much screening of UK cattle herds is undertaken to determine *Mycoplasma* infections in UK herds?

Table 3 provides figures for serological testing of APHA regional laboratory samples from England and Wales by ELISA. *Mycoplasma* diseases will be considered on any cases submitted to APHA for diagnosis, but further testing is carried out on suspect *Mycoplasma* cases (see antigen testing in Tables 1 and 2).

Serology for *Mycoplasma bovis* shows previous exposure to *Mycoplasma bovis*. Samples are submitted from suspect cases usually showing clinical signs of bovine respiratory disease, so this data is biased to clinical cases and cannot be extrapolated to the whole cattle population.

Table 3. APHA *Mycoplasma bovis* serological testing results by ELISA from England and Wales in 2016 and 2017.

Year	Number of Samples	Positive samples	Percentage positive	Number of Submissions	Positive samples	Percentage positive
2016	814	471	58	258	164	64
2017	574	280	49	197	126	64

While the data may suggest that the relative proportion of positives from both test numbers and submissions may have increased over the years, this is likely to have been confounded by increased awareness amongst vets and farmers about *M. bovis* in particular, which could bias submissions and test requests.

3. What measures does Defra take on imported cattle and has this changed or will it change? Is the EU still classed as free of mycoplasma?"

This part of your request has been answered under general correspondence and not in accordance with the FOIA.

With respect to screening for Mycoplasma, imported cattle are certified as coming from countries or regions free from contagious bovine pleuromonia (CBPP) so no official testing is carried out, as the risk is considered to remain negligible because the whole of the EU is free of CBPP - a disease caused by *Mycoplasma mycoides* subsp. *mycoides*. If that changes then import testing could be instated. APHA does not currently test imported cattle for non-notifiable mycoplasmas, such as *Mycoplasma bovis*, that are considered largely endemic diseases. This remains a decision for the farmer on the advice of their private vet.

Information disclosed in response to this FOI request is releasable to the public. In keeping with the spirit and effect of the FOIA and the government's Transparency Agenda, this letter and the information disclosed to you may be placed on GOV.UK, together with any related information that will provide a key to its wider context. No information identifying you will be placed on the GOV.UK website.

I attach an Annex which explains the copyright that applies to the information being released to you and contact details should you be unhappy with the service you have received.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact the Access to Information Team at the email address below or postal address at the top of this letter.

Yours sincerely

ACCESS TO INFORMATION TEAM

Email: enquiries@apha.gsi.gov.uk

Annex

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If you are unhappy with the result of your request for information you may request an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this letter.

If you wish to request an internal review, please contact: The Access to Information Team at enquiries@apha.gsi.gov.uk or at the postal address at the top of this letter, who will arrange for an internal review of your case.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have 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 APHA's own complaints procedure. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

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