



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Quarterly publication of National Statistics on the incidence and prevalence of tuberculosis (TB) in Cattle in Great Britain – to end **March 2020**

These statistics were released on Wednesday **17 June 2020**.

The next quarterly notice is to be updated on Wednesday **16 September 2020**.

The underlying monthly datasets will next be updated on Wednesday **15 July 2020**.

### Effects of the coronavirus on the statistics.

On 19 March 2020 social distancing measures and self isolation requirements were introduced that influenced the volume of TB testing that could be carried out. If a TB test cannot be completed before the end of the prescribed testing window, then the affected herd will be placed under restriction and its officially TB-free (OTF) status suspended. Herds not officially TB-free that have missed their next test will remain under restriction. Caution should be applied when comparing year-on-year changes in prevalence due to changes in the testing regime.

### Key points

- In England overall, the headline herd incidence rate for the 12 months to end March 2020 was 9.4, slightly above the rate for the previous 12 months. The herd prevalence rate decreased in all risk areas of England in March 2020 compared with March 2019 ([Table 1](#) and [Figure 2](#)).
- In Scotland, which has had officially TB-free (OTF) status since 2009, and in the Low Risk Area of England (LRA), herd incidence and herd prevalence remain very low and stable.
- In Wales herd incidence and herd prevalence decreased in March 2020 relative to 2019.
- Total animals slaughtered due to a TB incident in England in the 12 months to March 2020 decreased 6% on the previous 12 months to 30,073. In Wales the number slaughtered was 11,558, a decrease of 0.9% ([Table 3](#)).

### Feedback on these statistics

A new user [survey](#) is available for completion. We welcome feedback from all users. The survey will be available to complete until 31 July 2020.

**Short term changes in these statistics should be considered in the context of long term trends. The charts in this statistical notice give the latest indication of how trends in bovine TB have changed since 1996.**

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**Table 1: Herd incidence and herd prevalence**

|                    | <b>Herd incidence:</b> New herd incidents per 100 herd years at risk |                  | <b>Herd prevalence:</b> Disease restricted herds as a percentage of registered herds |                  |
|--------------------|--|------------------|--|------------------|
|                    | 12 months to end   | 12 months to end | 12 months to end   | 12 months to end |
|                    | Mar 19   | Mar 20           | Mar 19   | Mar 20           |
| England            | 9.2  | 9.4              | 6.2  | 5.1              |
| High risk area     | 18.0   | 16.8             | 11.6   | 9.7              |
| Edge area          | 9.5  | 9.6              | 6.8  | 5.7              |
| Low risk area      | 0.9  | 1.0              | 0.5  | 0.4              |
| Scotland           | 0.5  | 0.7              | 0.1  | 0.2              |
| Wales              | 7.5  | 6.8              | 5.9  | 5.4              |
| High West          | 13.3   | 11.6             | 11.5   | 10.1             |
| High East          | 10.5   | 9.4              | 7.0  | 6.3              |
| Intermediate North | 7.3  | 6.8              | 6.1  | 6.7              |
| Intermediate Mid   | 3.9  | 3.5              | 2.9  | 2.5              |
| Low                | 1.2  | 1.5              | 0.6  | 1.0              |

The headline measure of **Herd incidence** is the rate of new herd incidents per 100 herd years at risk. The rate is based around the total amount of time that herds tested were unrestricted and at risk of infection since the end of their last TB incident or negative herd test, rather than the total number of tests carried out on those herds. The rate in the High Risk Area of England was 16.8 at end March 2020, which means for every 100 unrestricted herds undergoing bTB surveillance in that period APHA detected on average 16.8 new breakdowns. A [document describing](#) the herd years at risk measure is available on the internet.

**Herd prevalence** - the percentage of all registered herds which were not Officially TB Free (OTF) due to a TB incident at end of March 2020 compared to the end of March 2019 ([Table 1](#)) decreased in all risk areas of England. Prevalence in the Edge area (5.7%) remains above the England overall figure (5.1%). In Wales overall herd prevalence has decreased from 11.5% to 10.1%.

The number of new TB herd incidents in the 12 months to end of March 2020 compared to 12 months to end March 2019:

- decreased by 9% in England, driven by reductions in all risk areas.
- decreased in Wales by 12% to 643, with only the Low TB area showing an increase ([Table 2](#)).

**Table 2: New herd incidents and non-OTF herds**

|                    | <b>New herd incidents</b> |              |                     | <b>Herds not officially TB free at the end of the period due to a bovine TB incident (non-OTF herds)</b> |              |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--------------|---------------------|--|--------------|---------------------|
|                    | 12 months to              | 12 months to | Year-on-year change | 12 months to   | 12 months to | Year-on-year change |
|                    | end Mar 19                | end Mar 20   |                     | end Mar 19   | end Mar 20   |                     |
| England            | 3,540                     | 3,229        | -9%                 | 3,009  | 2,541        | -16%                |
| High risk area     | 2,684                     | 2,455        | -9%                 | 2,325  | 1,965        | -15%                |
| Edge area          | 707                       | 638          | -10%                | 591  | 503          | -15%                |
| Low risk area      | 149                       | 136          | -9%                 | 93   | 73           | -22%                |
| Scotland           | 31                        | 40           | 29%                 | 19   | 28           | 47%                 |
| Wales              | 733                       | 643          | -12%                | 699  | 632          | -10%                |
| High West          | 339                       | 287          | -15%                | 370  | 319          | -14%                |
| High East          | 242                       | 212          | -12%                | 197  | 176          | -11%                |
| Intermediate North | 57                        | 49           | -14%                | 57   | 60           | 5%                  |
| Intermediate Mid   | 67                        | 59           | -12%                | 59   | 50           | -15%                |
| Low                | 28                        | 36           | 29%                 | 16   | 27           | 69%                 |

In Scotland the number of non-OTF herds is very low and approximately 62% of cattle herds are now exempt from routine TB surveillance testing. In Scotland and the LRA, there are proportionately more false positive results to the tuberculin skin test than elsewhere in GB. For example see articles in the [Veterinary Record](#). Consequently it is also important to consider the number of new herd TB incidents where officially TB free (OTF) status is withdrawn (OTFW) following confirmation of TB by post-mortem examination or laboratory culture of tissue samples.

**Table 2a: OTFW new herd incidents and OTFW herd incidence**

|                    | New herd incidents where OTF status is withdrawn (OTFW) |                         |                     | New herd incidents OTFW per 100 herd years at risk |                         |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------|---------------------|--|-------------------------|
|                    | 12 months to end Mar 19                                 | 12 months to end Mar 20 | Year-on-year change | 12 months to end Mar 19                            | 12 months to end Mar 20 |
| England            | 2,271   | 1,951                   | -14%                | 6.0  | 5.7                     |
| High risk area     | 1,823   | 1,561                   | -14%                | 12.3   | 10.7                    |
| Edge area          | 407   | 360                     | -12%                | 5.5  | 5.5                     |
| Low risk area      | 41  | 30                      | -27%                | 0.3  | 0.2                     |
| Scotland           | 7   | 17                      | 143%                | 0.1  | 0.4                     |
| Wales              | 424   | 347                     | -18%                | 6.9  | 6.0                     |
| High West          | 193   | 153                     | -21%                | 12.4   | 11.0                    |
| High East          | 162   | 133                     | -18%                | 9.9  | 8.5                     |
| Intermediate North | 23  | 23                      | 0%                  | 6.3  | 5.7                     |
| Intermediate Mid   | 34  | 22                      | -35%                | 3.4  | 2.6                     |
| Low                | 12  | 16                      | 33%                 | 0.8  | 1.0                     |

Note on Table 2a: In Wales, some TB incidents have OTF status withdrawn for epidemiological reasons only, in the absence of post-mortem confirmation. These are included in the time at risk measure in Table 2a, but for technical reasons, it is currently not possible to include them in the raw count of OTFW incidents.

In the low risk area of England:

- in the 12 months to March 2020 there were 30 OTFW incidents a decrease of 11 on the previous 12 month period. The OTFW herd incidence rate per 100 herd-years at risk has increased slightly to 0.3.

In Scotland:

- there were 17 OTFW incidents in 12 months to March 2020 compared with 7 in previous 12 month period.
- the OTFW herd incidence rate of breakdowns per 100 herd-years at risk was 0.4 in 12 months to end March 2020, an increase on the rate of 0.1 at end March 2019.

In the Low TB area of Wales:

- there were 16 OTFW incidents in 12 months to end March 2020, and 12 in previous 12 months.
- the OTFW herd incidence rate of breakdowns per 100 herd-years at risk was 1 at the end of March 2020, compared to 0.8 at the end of March 2019.

**Table 3: Total animals slaughtered\***

|                    | 12 months to end<br>Mar 19 | 12 months to end<br>Mar 20 | Year-on-year<br>change |
|--------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| England            | 31,898                     | 30,073                     | -6%                    |
| High risk area     | 23,760                     | 23,088                     | -3%                    |
| Edge area          | 7,411                      | 6,375                      | -14%                   |
| Low risk area      | 727                        | 610                        | -16%                   |
| Scotland           | 378                        | 271                        | -28%                   |
| Wales              | 11,660                     | 11,558                     | -1%                    |
| High West          | 7,792                      | 7,680                      | -1%                    |
| High East          | 2,192                      | 1,977                      | -10%                   |
| Intermediate North | 801                        | 1,070                      | 34%                    |
| Intermediate Mid   | 691                        | 616                        | -11%                   |
| Low                | 184                        | 215                        | 17%                    |

\* Includes test reactors, direct contacts and inconclusive reactors (reported for Wales only since April 2017).

There is a year on year 6% decrease in the number of cattle slaughtered due to a TB incident in England. In all three risk areas fewer animals were slaughtered in the 12 months ending March 2020 than in the previous 12 months.

In Wales overall there was a decrease of 1% in the number of animals slaughtered in 12 months ending March 2020 compared to previous 12 months. All regions within Wales apart from Intermediate North (+279) and Low (+31) demonstrated decreases. [An analysis](#) of the increase in animals slaughtered between October 2018 and June 2019 in Wales is available.

#### Notes on the data:

These statistics are obtained from the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) work management IT support system (SAM), used for the administration of TB testing in GB. They are a snapshot of the position on the date on which the data was extracted. These statistics may be subject to small revisions until all test results are available.

In particular, figures for the previous two calendar years and the current year will be subject to further revision as test and incident records are completed.

The herd incidence figures are revised quarterly. The latest revision includes a minor correction to the herd years at risk calculation for some Edge counties. This has led to a reduction in the Edge incident rate that was published last quarter for all time periods from March 2016. [Detailed guidance](#) on how these measures are calculated is available.

[Data for Northern Ireland](#) is not presented alongside the GB figures and is not produced on a comparable basis.

Headline data from 1996 onwards is available to [download](#) for GB countries, Wales TB areas and England risk areas.

This statistical notice and a wide range of other statistics are [available](#) on the internet

“England Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) Quarterly Overview” and “Great Britain Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) Quarterly Overview” are available to download as [visual representations](#) of four key measures.

An [interactive dashboard](#) has been introduced to provide online interrogation of the statistics.

## Details of the impact of the coronavirus on TB testing

A detailed summary of the testing changes is available on the [TB Hub](#).

In **England and Wales** a temporary amendment to the TB testing instructions is in place retrospectively from 23 March 2020. Calves under 180 days old at the start of a routine or targeted herd surveillance TB test can be excluded from skin testing in officially TB free (OTF) herds if, in the vet's judgement, they can't be tested safely in line with social distancing. If all eligible animals 180 days old and over have been TB tested with negative results, the test will be considered complete. Any calves 42 to 179 days old that can't be tested safely whilst maintaining social distancing will be left untested until the next TB test of the herd. In the meantime, the usual pre- and post-movement TB testing rules for cattle have continued to apply without temporary easements or derogations.

In **Scotland**, normal TB testing procedures still apply. If it's not possible to safely TB test calves whilst maintaining social distancing, the vet must record this on the test chart and the test will be incomplete. If the test is not completed within the testing window, then the whole test will become overdue. The whole herd will be placed under movement restrictions and its OTF status suspended until all eligible animals are tested with negative results.

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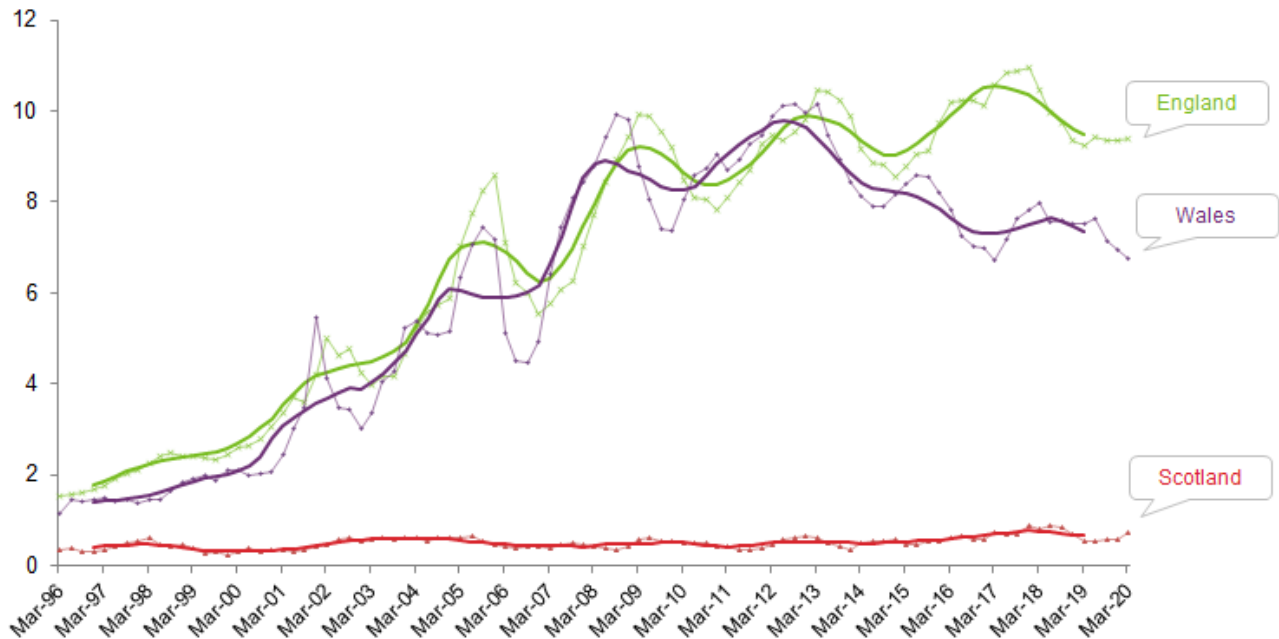
| Figure | Measure   | Geography          | Timing    |
|--------|---|--------------------|-----------|
| 1      | <a href="#">New herd incidents per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year</a>  | GB                 | quarterly |
| 2      | <a href="#">New herd incidents per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year</a>  | England risk areas | quarterly |
| 2a     | <a href="#">New herd incidents per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year – Wales, per quarter</a>   | Wales TB areas     | quarterly |
| 3      | <a href="#">New herd incidents with officially TB-free status withdrawn (OTFW) per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year</a>                      | GB                 | quarterly |
| 4      | <a href="#">New herd incidents with officially TB-free status withdrawn (OTFW) per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year</a>                      | England risk areas | quarterly |
| 4a     | <a href="#">New herd incidents with officially TB-free status withdrawn (OTFW) per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year – Wales, per quarter</a> | Wales TB areas     | quarterly |
| 5      | <a href="#">Number of herds under disease restrictions at the end of the period as a percentage of registered and active herds</a>                              | GB                 | monthly   |
| 6      | <a href="#">Number of herds under disease restrictions at the end of the period as a percentage of registered and active herds</a>                              | England risk areas | monthly   |
| 6a     | <a href="#">Number of herds under disease restrictions at the end of the period as a percentage of registered and active herds – Wales</a>                      | Wales TB areas     | monthly   |

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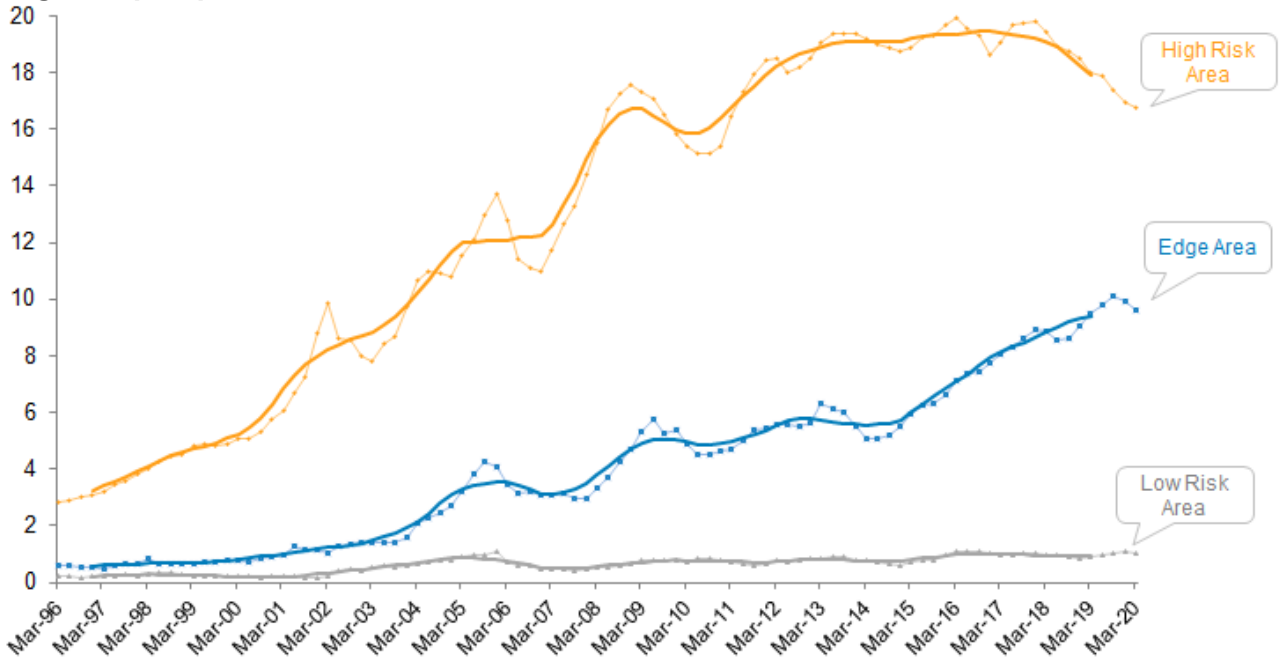
| Table | Measure   | Geography                              | Timing    |
|-------|---|--|-----------|
| 1     | <a href="#">Herd incidence and herd prevalence</a>              | GB, England risk areas, Wales TB areas | 12 months |
| 2     | <a href="#">New herd incidents and non-OTF herds</a>            | GB, England risk areas, Wales TB areas | 12 months |
| 2a    | <a href="#">OTFW new herd incidents and OTFW herd incidence</a> | GB, England risk areas, Wales TB areas | 12 months |
| 3     | <a href="#">Total animals slaughtered</a>                       | GB, England risk areas, Wales TB areas | 12 months |
| 4     | <a href="#">England County Structure</a>                        | England counties                       | n/a       |

## Herd incidence

**Figure 1: New herd incidents per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year - GB, per quarter**

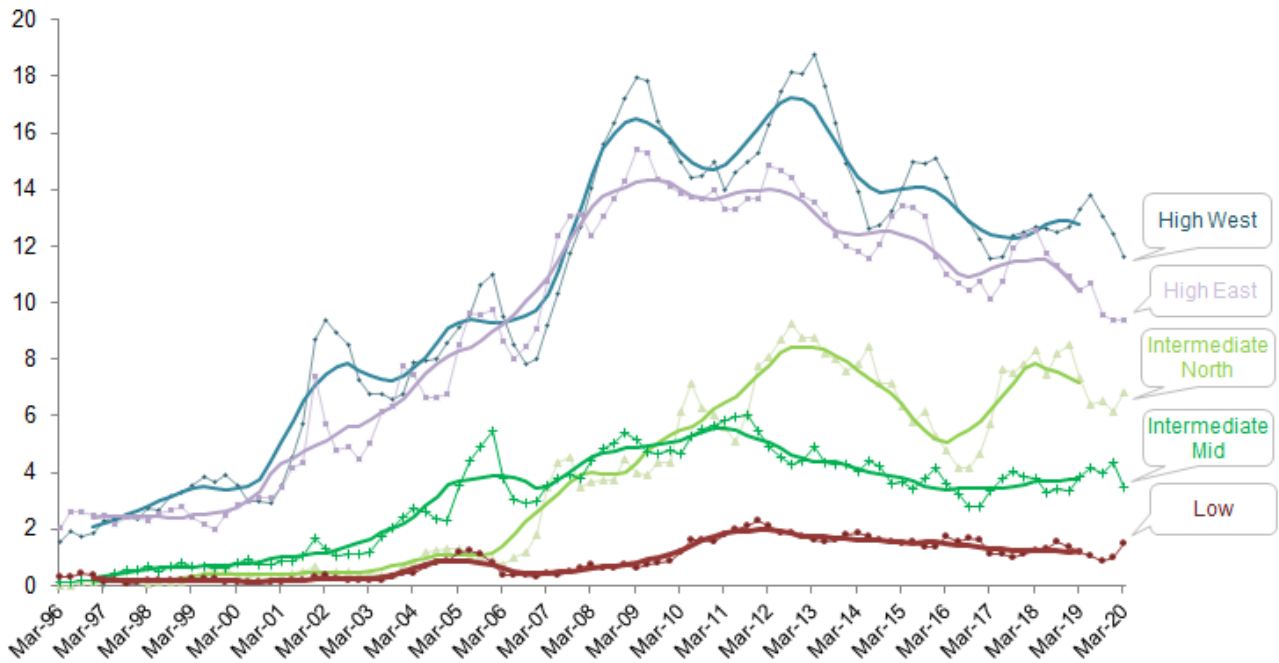


**Figure 2: New herd incidents per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year – England, per quarter**



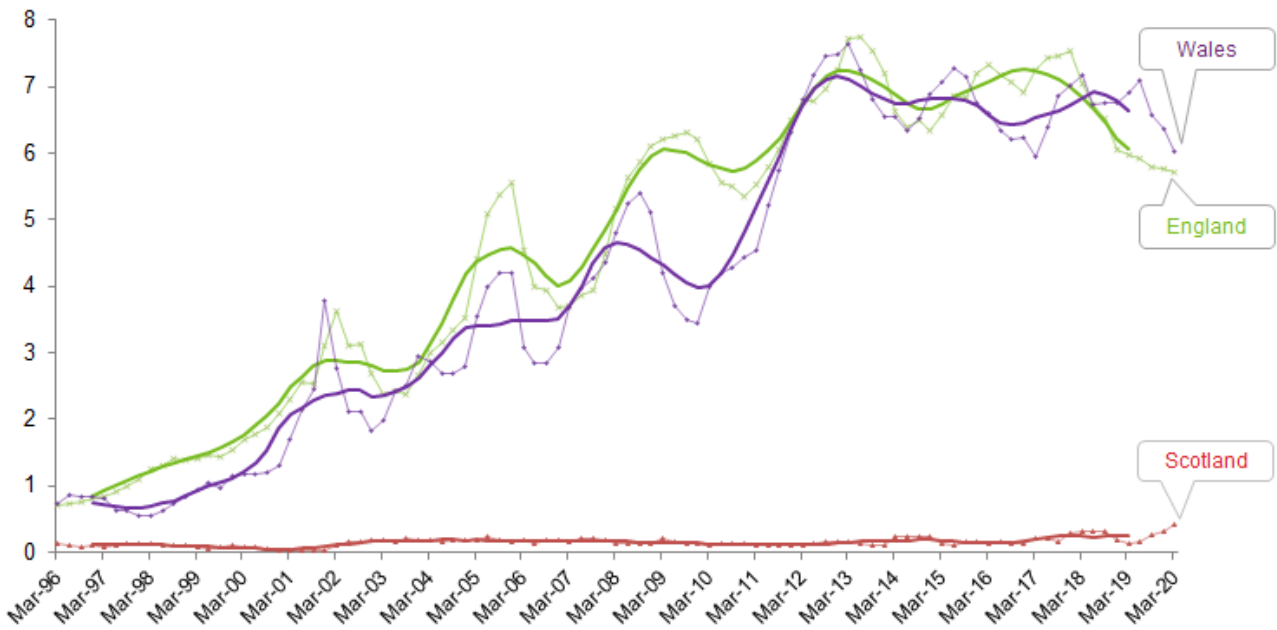
Bold lines represent 24 month centred rolling averages.

**Figure 2a: New herd incidents per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year – Wales, per quarter**





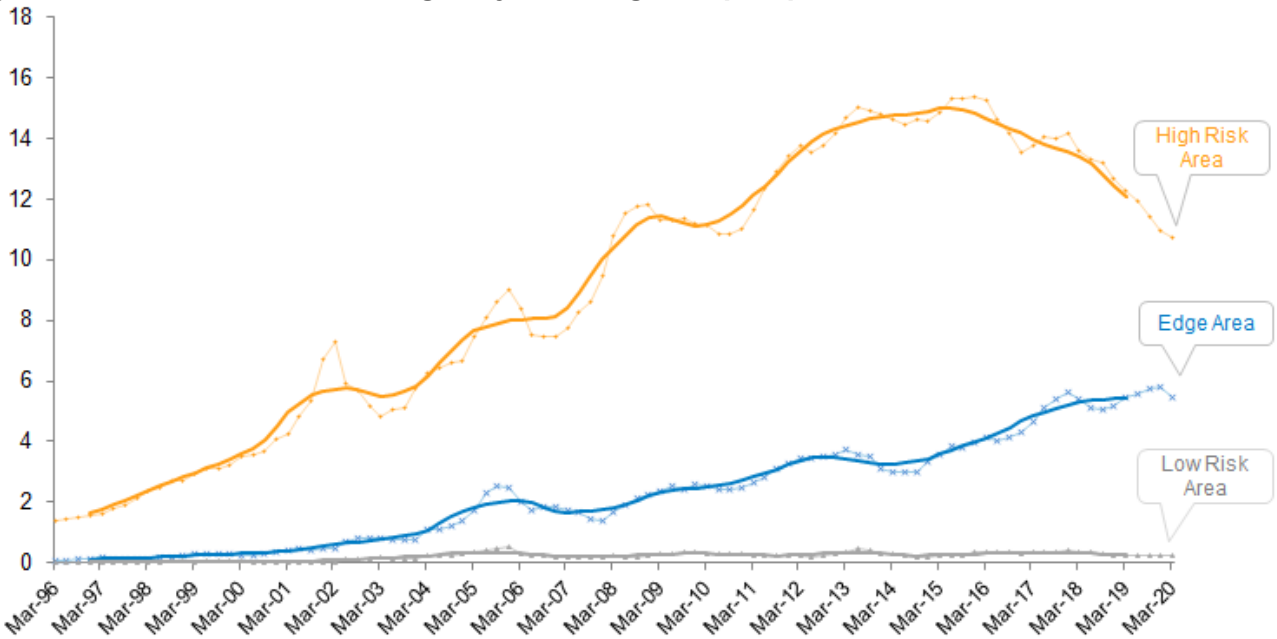
**Figure 3: New herd incidents with officially TB-free status withdrawn (OTFW) per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year – GB, per quarter**



Bold lines represent 24 month centred rolling averages.

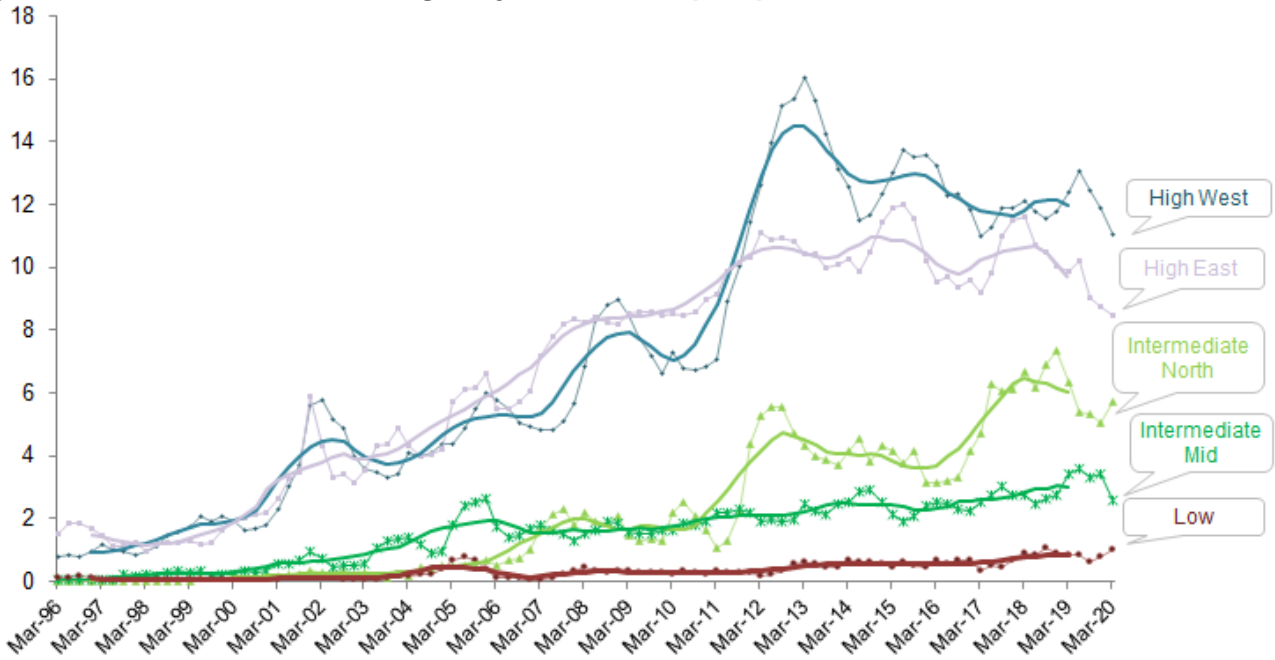
**NOTE:** from 2011, the figures presented above for OTF-W incidents per 100 herd years at risk in Wales are not directly comparable to England or Scotland. This is due to the inclusion of some incidents in Wales that have their OTF status withdrawn for epidemiological reasons only, in the absence of post-mortem confirmation. The figures presented here are not comparable with those for Wales in the spreadsheet downloads.

**Figure 4: New herd incidents with officially TB-free status withdrawn (OTFW) per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year – England, per quarter**





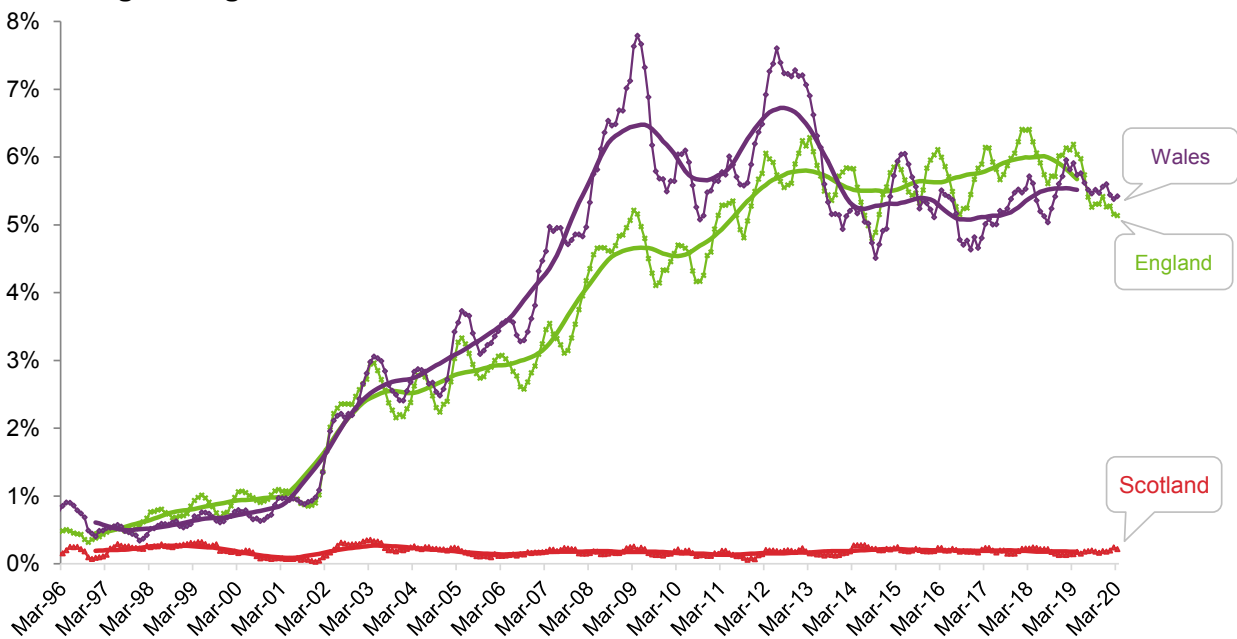
**Figure 4a: New herd incidents with officially TB-free status withdrawn (OTFW) per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year – Wales, per quarter**



Bold lines represent 24 month centred rolling averages.

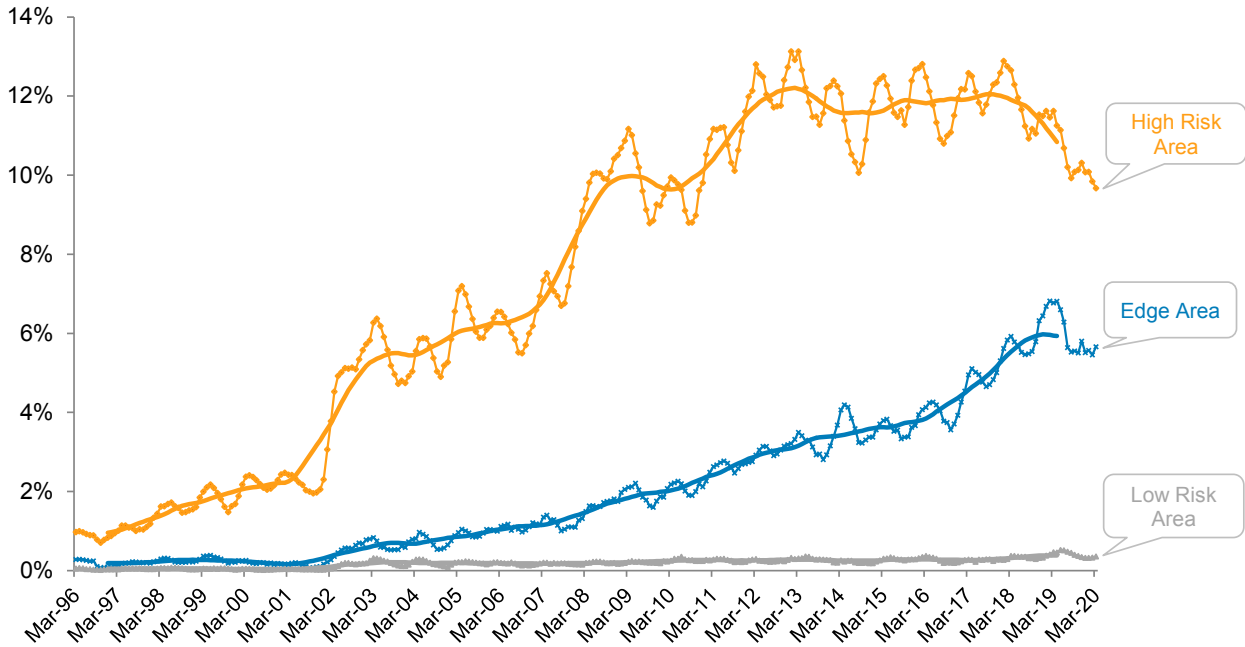
### Herd prevalence

**Figure 5: Number of herds under disease restrictions at the end of the period as a percentage of registered and active herds – GB**



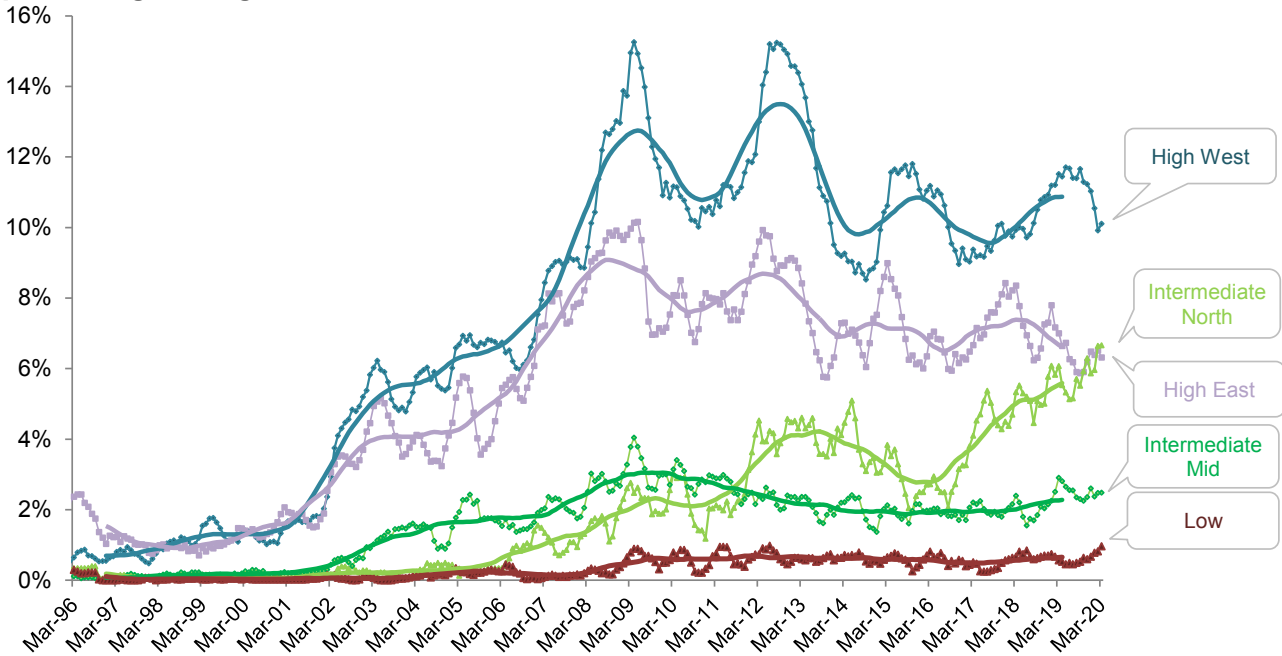
Bold lines represent 23 month centred rolling averages.

**Figure 6: Number of herds under disease restrictions at the end of the period as a percentage of registered and active herds – England**



NB England risk areas are as per the revised boundaries that came into force January 2018. Bold lines represent 23 month centred rolling averages.

**Figure 6a: Number of herds under disease restrictions at the end of the period as a percentage of registered and active herds – Wales**



Bold lines represent 23 month centred rolling averages.

## Commentary on incidence and prevalence of TB in Cattle in Great Britain

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### Factors affecting statistics on incidence and prevalence of TB in cattle

Short term changes in these statistics should be considered in the context of long term trends. Variation in the monthly and quarterly statistics can occur for a number of reasons, including:

- **Disease:** an increase in the trend can be the result of a higher proportion of herds experiencing a breakdown because of an increase in the underlying incidence of bTB.
- **Surveillance policy** (including the frequency of testing): Cattle herds in high risk areas are tested six monthly or annually and cattle herds in low risk areas are usually tested every four years. In Scotland approximately 62% of cattle herds are now exempt from routine TB surveillance testing. See [Surveillance policy in GB](#) If cattle herds in a low prevalence region are tested more frequently than every four years, the increase in the number of bTB tests will not necessarily be followed by a similar increase in the detection of infected cattle and so this may result in a decline in the incidence rate.
- **Seasonality:** more animals are tested when they are housed, during winter months, compared with when they are grazing outdoors in summer months. This is simply because it is easier to gather and test the cattle when they are already contained within a building. The trend lines in [Figures 1](#) to [6](#) account for this by presenting the 2 year moving average.
- Number of **testing days** in a given month: tests tend to be carried out at the beginning of the working week and the results collected and entered into the data system towards the end of the week. Months containing five Fridays may therefore have more positive test results than months containing four.

## Trends in TB

There has been an overall long-term upward trend in the incidence of TB in cattle herds in England and Wales since these statistical series began in 1996 although there is evidence that the rate of new incidents is levelling off in most areas of the country.

There was a fairly steady increase in the herd incidence rate until early 2001 when there was an outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) from February to October. During this period TB testing was suspended. In the meantime, new bTB breakdowns continued to be detected on farms through routine post-mortem meat inspection of cattle carcasses in slaughterhouses. Following the 2001 FMD outbreak there was a gradual resumption in TB testing. This led to an unusually high incidence rate for 2001 and 2002, when effectively two years' worth of breakdowns were identified in one year when the normal testing regime resumed.

There appears to be a three-year cycle in the bTB herd incidence rate from 2001 onwards. This can be observed in [figures 1 to 6](#), above, with peaks in 2005, 2008 and (to a lesser extent) 2013, and troughs in 2006 and 2009. This pattern has stabilised somewhat in recent years. There is no clear explanation for this pattern, because bTB is a chronic disease with a complex epidemiology and reservoirs of infection in cattle and, in some areas of GB, wildlife. There has been no stable time series because of surveillance and testing changes. For example, there have been different herd testing frequencies in each parish over time, ranging from annual to four-yearly and changing every year until those frequencies were unified in Wales in 2010 (annual) and in England in 2013 (annual and four-yearly). There has since been the introduction of 6-monthly testing.

There are several possible explanations:

1. The smoothed trend represents true seasonal changes in the transmission risk and prevalence of infection in wildlife and cattle populations. However, there is no strong evidence to support this.
2. After FMD, higher risk herds were tested every 3 to 4 years and could have contributed to a cyclically higher incidence rate. However, breakdowns in the 4-yearly (and formerly 3-yearly) testing areas represent a small and decreasing proportion of the breakdowns in any given year.
3. When testing resumed in 2002 following the 2001 FMD outbreak, high-risk herds may have been identified and put under restrictions if a reactor was identified, then control tested for a period (when they cannot generate a new incident). Once the bTB incident has been resolved and OTF herd status is restored, the herd becomes susceptible to a new incident as it undergoes post-breakdown surveillance tests at 6 and 18 months after regaining OTF status.
4. The incidence rate reflects changes to testing policy unrelated to the FMD outbreak, in particular increases in testing in 2005 and 2008.

In terms of prevalence (the percentage of herds with an open TB incident), [figure 5](#) shows an increase in England and Wales at the beginning of 2002. This may have been the result of the suspension of TB testing during the FMD outbreak in February-October 2001 (including the 60-day tests of TB-infected herds to regain OTF status) along with the detection of new breakdowns through routine slaughterhouse surveillance. Although TB herd testing gradually resumed from the end of 2001, a proportion of higher-risk herds

were put under TB restrictions pending completion of their overdue tests. Prevalence continued to increase steadily from 2002. In Wales there were peaks in 2009 and 2012, following which there has been a decline and stabilisation of the trend. After a peak in England in early 2013 the trend appears to have stabilised. However, for both England and Wales it is too early to conclude that this is part of a new longer term trend.

## Surveillance policy in GB

bTB surveillance and control policy – including how frequently animals are tested for bTB – varies between England, Wales and Scotland and has changed over time.

### Timeline:

**1990s:** most herds in GB tested every four years and background testing intervals determined on a parish basis. Herds in parishes with a high incidence of bTB breakdowns (in the South West of England and in parts of Wales) are tested on an annual or biennial basis, with a smaller number of three-yearly testing herds.

**2004 to 2010:** the proportion of parishes and herds in England and Wales with annual testing increases gradually as the disease spread, with a corresponding decrease in the proportion of parishes with four-yearly testing.

**2005 to 2006:** mandatory pre-movement skin testing of cattle in annually tested herds was introduced. First in Scotland in September 2005 followed by England in March 2006 and Wales in May 2006.

**October 2009:** the European Commission designates Scotland as an officially bTB free region of the UK.

**January 2010:** In England, a core annual testing area is established, spanning entire counties in the South West and West Midlands (the 'high risk area') and surrounded by a 'buffer' of two-yearly testing parishes. Most of the rest of England remains on background four-year testing. The Welsh Government puts all cattle herds in Wales on annual bTB testing (with herds in the small Intensive Action Area of West Wales put on 6-monthly bTB testing).

**2011 and 2012:** further expansion of the annual testing area in England to the east and north.

**January 2013:** herd testing intervals are determined on a county basis and England is split into annual testing and four-yearly testing counties. Annual testing of herds is extended to all the counties at the edge of the high risk area. Three- and two-yearly testing is abolished.

**January 2015:** all cattle herds in the edge area of Cheshire are put on six-monthly testing.

**April 2016:** mandatory post-movement skin testing of cattle was introduced in the Low risk area of England

**October 2017:** regionalised approach to TB eradication applied in Wales with the introduction of Low, Intermediate and High TB Areas.

**January 2018:** annual testing of cattle herds replaced with six-monthly herd testing in the higher incidence regions of the expanded Edge Area and annual herd testing supplemented with targeted ('radial') testing of herds located within a 3km radius of new OTFW incidents detected in the rest of the Edge Area.

## Current differences in surveillance policy in GB

The regional and county-level statistics published as part of this statistical notice (available at [www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/tuberculosis-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/tuberculosis-tb-in-cattle-in-great-britain)) show that there are considerable differences in the distribution and frequency of bovine TB across GB.

**Comparability of Wales data.** Since 2011, the trends for the herd incidence rate showing incidents with officially TB-free status withdrawn (OTFW) per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year (i.e. [table 2a](#) and [figure 3](#)) are not directly comparable for Wales and the other countries of GB. In Wales the number of incidents includes those where there is no confirmation of TB via post mortem examination or bacteriological culture, but where the herd's OTF status is withdrawn for epidemiological reasons. The overall herd incidence rate ([figure 1](#) and [table 1](#)) should be used to compare countries.

**Scotland**, which has had officially TB-free (OTF) status since 2009, has relatively few herd breakdowns. The herd incidence is very low and stable and is largely driven by sporadic introductions of infected cattle into Scotland. Scotland has in place a risk-based routine herd testing policy. This targets testing at higher risk herds. Around 57 per cent of herds are considered low risk herds and are exempt from routine testing. These are herds which have 50 or fewer animals, minimal import of animals from high risk areas and send a high proportion of animals to slaughter. Herds that are not exempt are tested every four years.

In **Wales**, TB incidence and prevalence varies across regions. From 1 October 2017, a regionalised approach to TB eradication applies in Wales with the introduction of Low, Intermediate and High TB Areas. This means that measures can be tailored to address the varying risks and disease. The TB areas in Wales are established on the basis of epidemiological evidence and risks in each area. A map of the areas is available at: <https://gov.wales/bovine-tb-incidence-map>. This regionalisation brought some changes to Pre- and Post- movement testing rules. From 1 October 2017 pre-movement testing is not required for movements within the Low TB Area and from the Low TB Area to other parts of Wales. Cattle moved into the Low TB Area from other areas (not including the English LRA) require a post-movement test.

All herds in Wales are tested for the disease at least annually. The strategically-located Intensive Action Area (north Pembrokeshire and small parts of Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire) has one of the highest incidence rates of bovine TB in Wales. Here there are extra measures in place to control the disease, such as stricter cattle controls, 6-monthly testing and improved biosecurity.

In **England**, there are wide geographical variations in the incidence and prevalence of bTB. This is reflected in the division of the country into three different epidemiological areas, with different disease control strategies and herd testing regimes applied in each of them:

- In the Low Risk Area of the North, East and South East of England, the incidence of bTB is very low and stable and most cattle herds are routinely tested every four



years. Similar to Scotland, the majority of breakdowns in the Low Risk Area can be linked to movements of undetected infected cattle from other areas of GB.

- In the Edge Area, the herd incidence is higher than in the Low Risk Area, although this varies from county to county. After a relatively stable period, prevalence has been increasing in more recent years [Figure 6](#). On 1 January 2018 the five part Edge, part HRA counties: Cheshire, Derbyshire, East Sussex, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire, moved to all Edge. Testing intervals are set out at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bovine-tb-testing-intervals-2019>.
- In the High Risk Area of the West Midlands and South West of England, the incidence and prevalence of infected cattle have increased steadily to relatively high levels. This is partly a result of a reservoir of endemic *M. bovis* infection in the local wildlife. There is evidence of a slowing down in both the incidence and prevalence rates since around 2012. [Figure 2](#) and [Figure 6](#).

## Methodology

For a description of the data sources and methodology used in the calculation of the TB statistics, together with notes on data revisions policy etc., please refer to the 'Background and Methodology' document at [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/data-and-methodology](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/data-and-methodology).

## Trends in herd tests

From October 2015 to November 2016 there were steady decreases in the number of TB tests completed on herds. The decrease is mainly as a result of changes in APHA testing procedures made in November 2015, and more specifically to testing of cattle that have moved out of TB-infected herds before detection of the disease ("TB forward tracings"). Changes to these "tracing" tests include:

- Bespoke tracing tests of individual animals are no longer performed in England if a whole-herd (or similar) test is already due in the herd of destination within 60 days of the tracing test date, and in Wales if the tracing test is due within the existing herd test window.
- Combining multiple tracing tests for a herd where the traced cattle originate from more than one holding and where test deadlines are within a one month period. Such tests were previously counted separately.

TB tracing tests are included in the "Herd tests" and the "Total cattle tests" measures and these changes are thought to account for much of the decrease in the herd test measures.

## Why monitor statistics about bTB?

**Legal requirements:** Defra policy is to achieve OTF status for England by 2038, and Welsh Government policy is to achieve OTF status between 2036 and 2041. Scotland achieved OTF status in September 2009. bTB statistics are used in England and Wales to measure progress towards this target, and to support the annual case for Scotland to retain its OTF status, as the qualification is based on herd incidence.



**Monitoring policy effectiveness:** Statistics on the incidence of bTB in cattle herds and the number of cattle slaughtered as a result of bTB are used by policymakers to monitor the spread and concentration of the disease and to inform decisions around the potential approaches to controlling it.

### Feedback on this release

We encourage our users to engage with us so we can improve our National and Official Statistics and identify gaps in the statistics that we produce. Should you have any comments on this statistical release and how to improve it to meet your needs please contact us. Contact details for the statisticians who produced these statistics are given at the front of this document. We wish to make our publications widely accessible. Please contact us at if you have any specific accessibility requirements.

### National Statistics Status

National Statistics status means that our statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value, and it is our responsibility to maintain compliance with these standards.

The continued designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed in December 2017 following a [compliance check](#) by the Office for Statistics Regulation. The statistics last underwent a full assessment against the [Code of Practice](#) in 2012 – [Assessment Report 240](#).

Since the latest review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to comply with the Code of Practice for Statistics, and have made the following improvements:

- added more value by providing more detailed breakdowns of TB areas in Wales
- included a glossary of key terms and added a mapping of English counties to TB regions
- added more value by introducing quarterly overview documents for England and Great Britain
- from Q4 2019 included an [interactive dashboard of measures](#)

## Annex 1 - Background Information on Bovine Tuberculosis

### What is bovine tuberculosis?

Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) is a chronic infectious disease of cattle. The risk bTB poses to human health is low, largely due to milk pasteurisation. The disease is detected either on farms (through mandatory skin tests of cattle herds for bTB at regular intervals) and at slaughterhouses (through post-mortem meat inspection of cattle carcasses).

### What are the impacts of bTB?

Bovine TB presents serious challenges to the food and farming industries and has economic and social impacts. The economic costs of a bTB breakdown are shared by farmers and government<sup>1</sup>. Costs are incurred for a number of reasons:

- Cattle which are found (or are highly likely) to have bTB are slaughtered. This loses the farmer the value of the animal and its output. Government pays farmers compensation for slaughtered animals which is based on the market value of cattle.
- There are costs associated with testing animals for bTB. Farmers incur costs from gathering animals together, such as paying workers for their time, and government pays the vets' fees for carrying out tests on the herd (and in the event of a breakdown on herds in neighbouring farms).
- When an animal in a herd tests positive for the disease, the whole herd is put under movement restrictions until all the remaining animals are tested repeatedly with negative results. This presents costs to farmers, for example because they are unable to move their cattle to market or buy in replacements for animals that are slaughtered.

Other impacts of high bTB levels can include:

- Restrictions on international trade in cattle and cattle products.
- Significant stress amongst farmers, their families and local communities<sup>2</sup>
- The infection spilling over to domestic and wild animals<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Economic analysis based on [research report SE3112 for Defra, 2004](#)

<sup>2</sup> See for example [research report SE3120 for Defra, 2008](#)

<sup>3</sup> For example Broughan, J. M., Downs, S. H., Crawshaw, T. R., Upton, P. A., Brewer, J. & Clifton-Hadley, R. S. (2013) *Mycobacterium bovis* infections in domesticated non-bovine mammalian species. Part 1: review of epidemiology and laboratory submissions in Great Britain 2004-2010. *Veterinary Journal* **198**, 346-35. See also [webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140405112558/http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/publication/pub-surveyreport-tb/](http://www.defra.gov.uk/ahvla-en/publication/pub-surveyreport-tb/)

### **Additional information on bovine TB**

More information on bovine TB in Great Britain can be found at:

England:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/bovine-tuberculosis-bovine-tb>

Wales:

<https://gov.wales/bovine-tb>

Scotland:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/animal-welfare/Diseases/disease/tuberculosis>

[The TB hub](#) contains practical advice for farmers on dealing with bovine TB on their farm, covering everything from biosecurity measures to understanding trading rules.

## Annex 2 - Glossary of key terms

A more detailed description of measures is included in the [Background and Methodology document](#)

| <b>Term</b>                     | <b>Description</b>   |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Bovine tuberculosis (bTB)       | bTB is caused by the bacterium <i>Mycobacterium bovis</i> ( <i>M. bovis</i> ). Cattle are the natural host of the bacterium. Many other species, including wildlife such as badgers and less commonly deer, are also susceptible to <i>M. bovis</i> and can develop TB and transmit the infection to other species.  |
| Breakdown                       | A breakdown is the term used to describe the occurrence in a herd of at least one animal with a positive reaction to the skin test, or the identification of <i>M. bovis</i> in an animal with TB lesions detected at routine slaughter. The affected herd is then placed under restrictions and loses its Officially TB Free (OTF) status.  |
| Direct Contact (DC)             | An animal in an OTFW incident that, although not a test reactor, was considered to have been exposed to <i>Mycobacterium bovis</i> and compulsorily slaughtered.   |
| Inconclusive reactor (IR)       | An animal showing a positive reaction to bovine tuberculin that was not strong enough for it to be deemed a reactor. Such animals are usually isolated and subjected to a second skin test after 60 days, unless removed earlier as DCs or IFN- $\gamma$ test reactors or voluntarily slaughtered by their owner.  |
| <b>Incidence and prevalence</b> |  |
| Incidence                       | The incidence of a disease is the disease occurrence in new cases in a defined population over a designated time period.   |
| Headline herd incidence         | New herd incidents per 100 herd years at risk of infection during the year. Herds which were previously OTF but either had cattle that reacted to a tuberculin test or had a tuberculous animal disclosed by routine meat inspection at slaughter, during the 12 months ending the date shown, divided by the amount of time herds tested during that period were unrestricted and at risk of infection. Figures for Wales include incidents where OTF status has been withdrawn for epidemiological reasons only. |
| Herd-years at risk              | The sum of the time (days, months or years) herds in the population are unrestricted and are therefore at risk of a new incident, among the group of herds that have had a herd-level test during the period of interest.  |
| Time at risk                    | Time spent not under restriction and at risk of having bTB during the observation period.  |

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Prevalence      | The prevalence of a disease is the disease presence in a defined population (at animals or herd level) in a designated time.  |
| Herd prevalence | Herds which were not officially TB-free (i.e. herds under movement restrictions with OTF status suspended or withdrawn) due to a TB incident, at the end of the period as percentage of the number of herds registered on the APHA's Sam (computer) system. |

### England risk areas

See also [www.gov.uk/guidance/bovine-tb-testing-intervals-2020](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/bovine-tb-testing-intervals-2020) for 2020 intervals and a map of GB TB areas.

|                      |   |
|----------------------|---|
| High Risk Area (HRA) | In the West Midlands and the South West of England, the incidence and prevalence of infected cattle have increased steadily to relatively high levels. This is partly a result of a reservoir of endemic <i>M. bovis</i> infection in the local wildlife. Herds are tested for bTB annually.  |
| Edge Area            | In the Edge Area herd incidence is higher than in the Low Risk Area, although this varies from county to county. Herds are tested for bTB annually or every six months. The Edge boundary was updated in January 2018 to include the parts of the counties of Derbyshire, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, East Sussex and Cheshire that had been designated HRA. It also spans Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire and Hampshire. |
| Low Risk Area        | North, East and South East of England, the incidence of bTB is very low and stable and most cattle herds are routinely tested every four years. Similar to Scotland, the majority of breakdowns in the Low Risk Area can be linked to movements of undetected infected cattle from other areas of GB.   |

### Officially bovine tuberculosis free (OTF) statuses

#### Officially bovine tuberculosis free herd status suspended (OTFS)

Incidents where OTF status was suspended because of reactors in the herds, but post-mortem evidence of TB is not detected. The status remains suspended until further herd tests confirm no infection remains on the farm. Figures for Wales include incidents where OTF status has been withdrawn for epidemiological reasons only.

#### Officially bovine tuberculosis free herd status withdrawn (OTFW)

Incidents where OTF status was withdrawn from the herd due to the detection of lesions typical of TB during post-mortem examination of one or more test reactors or inconclusive reactors, or where samples from one or more reactor, inconclusive reactor or a slaughterhouse case produce positive culture results for *Mycobacterium bovis*. Figures for Wales do not include incidents where OTF status has been withdrawn for epidemiological reasons only. These are currently included within the OTFS figures.

Officially TB Free (OTF) status of a country or region

“OTF Status” takes its meaning from European law: for a region or Member State of the EU to be considered to be OTF the annual incidence of herds with confirmed *M. bovis* infection must not have exceeded 0.1% and at least 99.9% of the herds within it must have been free from bTB at the end of the year for at least six consecutive years.

## Testing

Single intradermal comparative cervical test (SICCT)

The tuberculin skin test: if tuberculin (a purified sterile cocktail of proteins derived from *M. bovis* cultures) is injected into the skin of an animal infected with *M. bovis*, this will cause a localised allergic reaction characterised by temporary swelling of the skin, which is measured 72hrs after the injection. The principle is very similar to the skin tests for TB in humans.

Gamma interferon test (IFN- $\gamma$  or gIFN)

Laboratory-based blood test approved as an ancillary diagnostic tool that measures the release of  $\gamma$ -IFN in whole blood cultures stimulated with tuberculin.

## Statistical Terms

24 or 23 -month moving average centred

The moving average line has been included in the charts to help identify trends with seasonality smoothed. The centred 24-month moving average has been calculated as the average of the values for the quarter and the previous 3 quarters and subsequent 4 quarters, giving each quarter equal weight. The centred 23-month moving average has been calculated as the average of the values for the month and the previous 11 months and subsequent 11 months, giving each month equal weight.

## Annex 3 - England county mapping within regions

A non-standard regional structure is used for the English county data. Currently it is published in five documents by TB statistics region as per [table 4](#).

**Table 4 England County Structure**

| <b>County</b>         | <b>TB Risk Area</b> | <b>TB Stats Region</b> |
|-----------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Leicester             | Edge                | Midlands               |
| Northamptonshire      | Edge                | Midlands               |
| Nottinghamshire       | Edge                | Midlands               |
| Derbyshire            | All Edge from 2018  | Midlands               |
| Warwickshire          | All Edge from 2018  | Midlands               |
| Hereford & Worcester  | High                | Midlands               |
| Shropshire            | High                | Midlands               |
| Staffordshire         | High                | Midlands               |
| West Midlands         | High                | Midlands               |
| Lincolnshire          | Low                 | Midlands               |
| Cheshire              | All Edge from 2018  | North                  |
| Cleveland             | Low                 | North                  |
| Cumbria               | Low                 | North                  |
| Durham                | Low                 | North                  |
| East Yorkshire        | Low                 | North                  |
| Greater Manchester    | Low                 | North                  |
| Lancashire            | Low                 | North                  |
| Merseyside            | Low                 | North                  |
| North Yorkshire       | Low                 | North                  |
| Northumberland        | Low                 | North                  |
| South Yorkshire       | Low                 | North                  |
| Tyne & Wear           | Low                 | North                  |
| West Yorkshire        | Low                 | North                  |
| Berkshire             | Edge                | South East             |
| Buckinghamshire       | Edge                | South East             |
| Hampshire             | Edge                | South East             |
| East Sussex           | All Edge from 2018  | South East             |
| Oxfordshire           | All Edge from 2018  | South East             |
| Bedfordshire          | Low                 | South East             |
| Cambridgeshire        | Low                 | South East             |
| Essex                 | Low                 | South East             |
| Greater London        | Low                 | South East             |
| Greater London - East | Low                 | South East             |
| Hertford              | Low                 | South East             |
| Isle of Wight         | Low                 | South East             |
| Kent                  | Low                 | South East             |
| Norfolk               | Low                 | South East             |
| Suffolk               | Low                 | South East             |
| Surrey                | Low                 | South East             |
| West Sussex           | Low                 | South East             |
| Avon                  | High                | South West             |



|                 |      |            |
|-----------------|------|------------|
| Cornwall        | High | South West |
| Devonshire      | High | South West |
| Dorset          | High | South West |
| Gloucestershire | High | South West |
| Somerset        | High | South West |
| Wiltshire       | High | South West |
| Isles of Scilly | Low  | South West |

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