

Approval and operation of an Approved Finishing Unit to allow the purchase of TB restricted cattle from multiple sources for rearing, fattening or finishing (without grazing) in Wales: Guidance notes

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Background and Purpose

1. Approved Finishing Units (AFUs) were introduced to provide an outlet for the rearing, fattening and/or finishing of clear tested cattle from TB restricted holdings lacking such facilities.
2. AFUs are approved for cattle only. They are not intended for milk production nor for pregnant animals and no breeding must take place in these units. Written contingencies must be in place for any calves born unexpectedly in the unit as part of the approval.
3. AFUs may source cattle from any area of Wales, England or Scotland, from TB restricted premises and may also accept cattle not restricted for TB that can move without the required pre-movement test, that are exempt from pre-movement testing or that have been pre-movement tested.
4. The conditions of approval and operation have been formulated to ensure disease security, taking into account that:
 - the unit must be under TB restrictions
 - cattle must remain housed at all times
 - cattle from several different sources (but mainly from TB restricted premises) will be present
 - cattle originating from a TB restricted premises (not an AFU) must have been tested in the previous 90 days with negative results, unless under 42 days old when moved
 - cattle originating from an AFU do not need to have had a clear pre-movement test for moves to an AFU/AFUE, either directly or via a TB Dedicated Sale, unless an AFU moving cattle to these destinations is non-compliant with the conditions of their AFU approval, or an AFU moving on cattle from these destinations is non-compliant with the conditions of their AFU approval
 - turnover of animals will be high
 - unit must always comply with strict biosecurity conditions
 - the unit must have an individual County Parish Holding (CPH) number allocated
 - the unit must not have a temporary CPH (tCPH) or Temporary Land Association (TLA) registered against it nor can land, or premises registered against an AFU CPH be associated temporarily through a TLA or tCPH to another CPH
 - in Wales, an AFU cannot be approved in the Low or Intermediate TB Areas.

Source of Cattle

1. All movements of cattle on to the AFU must be licensed and are subject to a risk assessment by APHA. Those considered to be high risk will be refused. Cattle may be moved on to the AFU in Wales:
 - from a TB restricted premises (not an AFU) directly, under the authority of a movement licence (TB16/TB16e/TB16e(Welsh)) or via an approved TB dedicated sale (“orange market”) in England and Wales, under licence (TB16b/TB16e/TB16e (Welsh)). Movements must comply with the conditions of this licence and cattle must have had a negative tuberculin test within 90 days of the movement (except calves under 42 days of age)
 - from another AFU/AFUE in England or Wales, provided this is the first AFU to AFU move for the animals being moved, directly under licence (TB16/TB16e/TB16e (Welsh)) or via an approved TB dedicated sale (orange market) under licence (TB16b/TB16e/TB16e (Welsh))
 - from herds not restricted for TB, (under licence TB15a):
 - without the requirement for a pre-movement test
 - that are exempt from pre-movement testing
 - that have been pre-movement tested
2. If a TB incident is identified at the farm of origin of cattle in the AFU, the cattle will not be traced and/or notified to the AFU. Post-import testing of imported cattle entering an AFU is not required. Testing of all animals of 180 days and over on a six monthly basis continues to provide regular routine surveillance in AFUs, but AFU operators ultimately will need to accept responsibility for any reduction in value of any carcase following slaughter as a result of TB lesions being disclosed in such cattle.
3. An AFU cannot accept reactors or inconclusive reactors to the tuberculin skin test, animals with positive results to an Interferon-gamma test/ IDEXX test or direct contacts, all of which must be taken directly to slaughter from the TB restricted herd. An AFU cannot accept any animals awaiting the results of a tuberculin skin test, or an Interferon-gamma, or IDEXX test.
4. An AFU can receive cattle directly from an AFU/AFUE, or via a TB Dedicated Sale, which have not had a pre-movement test, providing both the origin and destination AFUs are compliant with their AFU approval conditions. If either AFU is non-compliant with AFU approval conditions all eligible cattle (42 days and over) will require a clear pre-movement test within 90 days from any destination.

Movements of cattle off the Approved Finishing Unit

Cattle can leave the AFU in Wales:

1. For slaughter:
 - under a general licence (TB24g) if destined direct to slaughter
 - via an approved TB Slaughter Gathering for TB-restricted cattle under licence (TB24b)
2. Directly to another AFU in Wales, AFU/AFU(E) in England under the authority of a movement licence (TB16/TB16e/TB16e(Welsh)). Cattle are only allowed to undertake one movement from an AFU in Wales to another AFU in Wales.

3. To an Approved TB Dedicated Sale (orange market) in England or Wales under the authority of a movement licence (TB16b/TB16b(Welsh /TB16e/TB16e(Welsh)). From the TB Dedicated Sale the cattle can be moved on under licence directly to slaughter or to another AFU in Wales (provided this is their first AFU to AFU movement) or to an AFU/AFUE in England.

4. Cattle moving off an AFU to an AFU/AFUE in Wales/ England, or to a TB Dedicated Sale do not require a clear pre-movement test, unless the AFU has been informed by APHA that they are non-compliant with the conditions of the approval (see testing below).

Conditions

These are aimed at ensuring that the AFU remains a discrete, self-contained cattle unit clearly isolated from other cattle herds. The Veterinary Lead Wales (VLW) can consider the approval of rearing and fattening/finishing units primarily for cattle from restricted herds if the proposed premises comply with the conditions listed below.

- the unit is in a dedicated yard with housing on an Officially TB Free (OTF) premises or
- the unit is in a dedicated yard with housing on a premises that has lost OTF status, subject to satisfactory veterinary risk assessment (VRA) and where it complies with the following conditions:
 - it is an intensive fattening unit with sufficient housing within the proposed unit to accommodate **all** the cattle on the breakdown premises
 - the proposed unit meets all the other conditions for approval
 - the conditions for restoring OTF status to the remainder of the premises (land and any cattle buildings not incorporated into the AFU, e.g. in a completely separate location within the CPH) comply with those for total depopulation
- the unit must meet the criteria required to qualify for a separate CPH
- the boundaries of the unit must be well defined, discrete, effective and secure. There should be separate housing, management, equipment (refer below), machinery (refer below), yards etc. The boundaries must be livestock-proof to ensure a 3m gap or something that effectively serves the same purpose e.g. a solid wall to a building with no openings or opportunity for leakage of run-off from the unit would be an acceptable part of a boundary
- there must be no opportunity for straying or for nose-to-nose contact with other livestock
- multiple units, i.e. each unit with a separate CPH, cannot co-exist within the same yarded area but multiple buildings within a yarded area may be acceptable as one single unit
- units must have strict biosecurity with protocols in place for movements of personnel, equipment and vehicles entering and leaving the unit. All such movements must be limited to those essential to the running of the unit
- if personnel, equipment or vehicles are to be used/have access to other cattle outside of the unit, the biosecurity protocol should refer to this to ensure that there is no direct or indirect contact with TB susceptible stock outside the unit
- protocols must also be in place for drainage of effluent and washings from the unit. There must be no drainage of effluent or wash offs from the unit into areas where TB susceptible stock have access
- protocols must include access to feed

- cattle may only move into the unit under licence issued by APHA. No other cattle must have access to the unit at any time
- buildings must have sufficient space to allow for the growth of the cattle to be allowed in the unit and a maximum capacity stated in the conditions for approval. It is the responsibility of the owner/operator of the unit to ensure that the welfare of the cattle is not compromised by overcrowding. The number of cattle which the unit can hold must be included on the approval and the owner/operator must have considered contingencies to exclude potential adverse welfare conditions which will be recorded and agreed
- units must be wildlife proof, either the buildings containing the cattle must be fully wildlife proof or the boundary to the unit must be fully wildlife proof. This can be achieved for example by the use of electric fencing as a boundary around the building(s)
- wildlife-proof in this context refers to species of wild mammals that can act as reservoirs of *Mycobacterium bovis* (e.g. badgers and potentially, wild deer) and suitable conditions include:
 - sides of the building should not be open, but of a smooth and solid construction (i.e. not to allow wildlife to get a purchase) and a minimum of 1.5m high
 - doors should be of smooth and solid construction (i.e. not to allow wildlife to get a purchase) and a minimum of 1.5m high (solid sheets of metal can be added to a five bar gate)
 - gaps at the sides and under doors and walls should be no greater than 7.5cm and must not be able to be enlarged by digging or chewing
 - where effluent or waste water drains into a soak away ditch, livestock and wildlife must not have access and electric or other suitable fencing could be used to prevent such access. This is to prevent the contamination of the environment and wildlife
 - where appropriate, electric fencing can be used at the boundary of the unit to ensure access by wildlife is denied (best practice would also be to include feed stores and silage face etc. in order to prevent adding to the disease risk from the local wildlife). Where electric fencing is used it is important to note that strands of wire should be at 10, 15, 20 and 30cm above the ground
- equipment and machinery used in the unit should be dedicated unless:
 - contamination is at a level that can realistically and satisfactorily be cleaned using a power wash and disinfection. Contamination will be assessed according to risk. For example, a shared feed wagon that does not enter cattle areas nor come within reach of cattle may be acceptable, whilst a shared dung scraper will not
 - any contamination is dealt with immediately and certainly before contact with other TB susceptible stock
 - a full and effective biosecurity protocol is in place for all shared equipment and machinery
- there should be dedicated personnel, or, at the very least, dedicated outerwear or disinfectable waterproof clothing and footwear must be worn and a protocol provided to demonstrate elimination of risk of disease spread
- there must be adequate dedicated testing facilities; as a minimum this should incorporate a crush, a sufficiently long race, a collecting yard and a covered testing area
- a system must be in place to collect run-off water and effluent from the unit that prevents contamination of watercourses

- there must be facilities for the storage of manure, used bedding and slurry. After removal, manure and slurry should be treated and stored as set out on the back of the Notice Requiring Cleansing and Disinfection ([BT05](#)), to allow for inactivation of *Mycobacterium bovis*. The slurry and manure must then be spread (off the unit) on arable land or, alternatively, on pasture land to which susceptible stock will have no access for a minimum of 60 days. Slurry should be spread by injection, or other means which minimise the risk of aerosol spread. Records must be kept of all locations and dates of such spreading
- movements of cattle into and out of the unit must be reported within the prescribed timescales
- any other conditions considered necessary or appropriate by the VLW.

Application and Inspection

1. Anyone seeking approval for an AFU should contact Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) who will then provide them with a copy of the application form. The application form is also available on GOV.UK: [Approved finishing units for cattle: application and approved premises - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
2. On receipt of a completed application, site plan of the premises to be approved and biosecurity protocol the VLW will arrange for an APHA Veterinarian to inspect the proposed premises. Particular attention will be paid to biosecurity and the testing facilities.
3. Following a satisfactory inspection report from the APHA Veterinarian, the VLW will return the form, which will contain the conditions of continued approval, with the necessary approval.
4. The AFU, which will have its own dedicated CPH (or a separate CPH if within a holding), will be served with a Notice Prohibiting Movement of Bovine Animals (TB02) which will be copied to the relevant Local Authority.
5. In addition to testing, the premises, records of movements and slurry/manure applications etc. will be subject to inspections periodically (which may be unannounced) and, as a minimum, on an annual basis, by APHA. Failure to comply with any of the conditions set out in the approval form (including failure to test the cattle on the unit at the prescribed interval and failure to report movements within the prescribed timescale) will result in withdrawal of the approval. In this case, TB02 movement restrictions will continue to operate until the unit is depopulated and thoroughly cleansed and disinfected (C&D), with a satisfactory inspection of C&D by APHA before Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) status can be achieved.
6. AFUs are commercial enterprises, and their owners/operators are best placed to promote their commercial activities. It is up to them to negotiate separately any contractual sale. Upon approval of a holding as an AFU, the owners should be encouraged to register their interest with local farming organisations and advertise on the web, farming press, etc. However, it is not the role of APHA to publicise or give out the details of a particular AFU to farmers affected by TB restrictions. It is for industry stakeholders to update their members on the availability of AFUs for TB restricted cattle.

APHA will list all approved premises on GOV.UK:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/finishing-units-for-cattle-approved-premises/approved-finishing-units-england-and-wales>

and approved AFUs are included in ibTB at: [ibTB - Mapping bovine TB \(bTB\) in England and Wales](#)

TB Testing on Approved Finishing Units

1. Testing of cattle within the AFU will be on a six monthly basis.
2. At the six month TB test only cattle of 180 days old or over will be tested routinely in AFUs. APHA may require calves under 180 days old to be tested if a particular risk is identified in this age group.
3. If testing is overdue by 30 days, any general licences will be revoked and the approval as an AFU may be revoked.
4. If there has been a non-compliance with approval conditions at the last APHA audit and this has been notified to the keeper, then all eligible cattle of 42 days and over will require a clear pre-movement test within 90 days of a move to an AFU/AFUE in Wales/ England, or to a TB Dedicated Sale, at the expense of the operator, unless it is completed as part of a government-funded herd test. Pre-movement testing is not required, if the most recent inspection is compliant.

Action in the Event of a TB Incident in the Approved Finishing Unit

1. Standard APHA procedures for compensation, removal and post-mortem of reactors will be followed.
2. Disclosure of reactors or a slaughterhouse case will not trigger short interval testing (SI).
3. If a slaughterhouse case is reported, an immediate check test of all cattle at severe interpretation may be required. If samples from the slaughterhouse case give a positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or culture result, a 90 day TBU test of all cattle at severe interpretation will be required.
4. A 90 day TBU test at severe interpretation will be required following the identification of reactors. Inconclusive reactors at a routine test unless the operator requests a specific licence to send them for slaughter prior to the retest.
5. Providing the test is clear, testing will then revert to six monthly. However, if it is not clear, further 90 day TBU tests may be required.
6. The owner/operator may wish to depopulate the AFU rather than carrying out a testing programme. In these cases the AFU must be cleansed and disinfected as stated in the conditions on the Notice Requiring Cleansing and Disinfection ([BT05](#)). This will be inspected, before restocking is approved.
7. The VLW may stop the movement of cattle onto the AFU if a severe TB incident is disclosed in the unit as a whole or in a part of it.

Action on the farm of origin when animals have been consigned to an AFU

Slaughterhouse cases from AFUs should be routinely back traced to the farm of origin and any implications for management of the breakdown at the farm of origin need to be considered. If the supply herd has passed two 60-day tests since the movement, then normally no action would be required, but APHA may consider the need to instigate further check tests.

Premises of origin in Wales only

Except where the only animals sent to the AFU are under 90 days old when moved, the movement of TB restricted cattle to an AFU is only permitted when the herd of origin is due two further Short Interval tests.

Re-gaining Officially Tuberculosis Free (OTF) Status (Lifting TB02 restrictions on the AFU)

If the operator wants the unit to regain OTF status the following are necessary before restrictions can be withdrawn:

- they must notify the VLW of the intention to regain OTF status
- the intake of cattle must cease
- the requirement to undertake trace testing will recommence from the moment an AFU seeks to regain OTF status
- all cattle on the unit must be sent for slaughter as and when ready for slaughter
- once depopulated, the unit must be cleansed and disinfected as per the conditions on the back of the Notice Requiring Cleansing and Disinfection (BT05):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tb-restricted-cattle-declare-cleansing-and-disinfection-in-england>

- manure and slurry must be treated as prescribed in the conditions listed above
- cleansing and disinfection must be confirmed as satisfactory on inspection by APHA.



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APHA is an Executive Agency of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and also works on behalf of the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Food Standards Agency to safeguard animal and plant health for the benefit of people, the environment and the economy.