

Changes to Bovine TB Surveillance

Bovine TB Information Note 04/12

October 2012

From **1st January 2013**, a new TB surveillance testing regime will be introduced for cattle herds in England. TB testing intervals for cattle will be determined on a county basis rather than by parishes.

What is changing?

England will be divided into **two** cattle TB testing frequency areas as per the attached map:

- An annual testing area in the south-west and west of the country and in East Sussex, including both areas where the disease is endemic and the adjoining counties where TB incidence is currently low but the risk of geographic spread of the disease in the short to medium term is highest; and
- A four-yearly testing area for the rest of England, i.e. in most counties in the south-east and in the east and north of the country, where the disease is less prevalent and bovine TB occurs only sporadically and primarily because of infection through cattle movements from the endemic areas.

Also:

- There will be no two-yearly and three-yearly tested areas or herds from 2013.
- There will be no higher testing frequency parishes embedded in the four-yearly testing counties.
- TB surveillance around OTF Withdrawn (OTF-W) breakdowns in the four-yearly testing area will be enhanced and extended beyond the immediately contiguous herds, to better determine whether there has been any localised spread of disease. Herds within a 3km radius of the case which is initially identified will require an immediate skin test and then follow up tests 6 months later and, if results are negative, 12 months thereafter. During this time, these herds will require pre-movement testing.
- Individual high risk cattle herds in the four-yearly testing area of England will continue to be tested for TB every year as currently.
- Mandatory interferon-gamma blood testing of new OTF-W herds will continue as currently, including for the time being in areas which in 2013 will be on annual testing but which in 2012 were either on 2, 3, or 4 yearly testing.

What will cattle owners need to do and when?

Cattle owners will be notified of their cattle testing frequency by AHVLA in the normal way.

What impact will this change have on farmers?

Although this is a change to how the frequency of herd tests is calculated – most businesses will not be affected, except in areas where annual testing has been extended to include whole counties or where herds are located near to OTF-W breakdowns in the four-yearly testing area. These herds will now be tested more often and will also be required to pre-movement test. Some herds located in the four-yearly testing area will remain on annual testing, as set out in the bullet points above. However, herds in the vicinity of OTF-W herd breakdowns in the proposed four-yearly testing area should see their routine TB testing intervals return to four-yearly testing more quickly than under the old parish-based system when they are located near to a TB breakdown even if they were on more frequent testing in 2012. For a few herds, the move to a county-based approach will result in a reduction in the testing frequency, which better reflects the overall disease risk in the area.

It is intended that testing frequencies should remain stable for a number of years following this change. However, if there were marked increases in the numbers of new cases in the four-yearly testing counties, calculating the testing frequency on the basis of whole counties rather than parishes would mean that whole counties could be placed on more frequent testing rather than individual parishes.

Why are these changes being made?

Evidence from a range of national TB incidence and other epidemiological data suggests that there has been continued geographical spread of the endemic TB area towards the north and east of England. To keep ahead of this 'disease front' we need to expand the core annual testing area to include areas which although not currently high-risk for TB, are at risk of geographic spread of TB in the short to medium term. This will help us to proactively tackle geographical disease spread, using a combination of additional appropriate measures and annual testing in these areas. These further measures are being developed and will be introduced during 2013 to specifically address the spread of the disease edge.

Using a larger administrative unit than the parish is better epidemiologically and reflects a clearer picture of the distribution of the disease in England. It also provides a more stable risk-based surveillance strategy for the future, ensuring that resources are targeted correctly and will have a greater disease control impact. The move also makes us compliant with EU law, which states that the default testing intervals should be set at the county level and will help us to continue to secure much needed EU co-financing for our TB eradication plan.

Q&A

Has the Animal Health and Welfare Board for England considered these changes?

Yes. The Animal Health and Welfare Board for England (AHWBE) endorsed the proposed changes.

Which additional counties will be placed on annual TB testing?

In addition to the counties currently on annual testing, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hampshire and East Sussex will all be placed entirely onto annual testing. All of these counties already have areas of annual and/or two-yearly testing in place in response to established clusters of endemic TB infection, recent disease spread or to buffer the annually tested high risk areas. The remainder of the country will be placed on four-yearly testing.

Will some herds in the four-yearly testing area be placed on more frequent testing?

Yes. The same rules will continue to apply as at present, where herds are considered to be at a higher TB risk. For example bull hire herds, heifer rearing herds, producer-retailers of raw drinking milk, regular purchasers of cattle from high incidence countries or counties in England and Wales will be placed on annual testing. Herds located near to or epidemiologically linked to OTF-W herds in the four-yearly tested area will be tested more frequently and be subject to pre-movement testing requirements for a while.

Will I still be notified of my testing interval (TI) and herd testing interval (HTI) the same way as in previous years?

Yes, a statement letter detailing your area TI and HTI will be sent to you in late November / early December as previously.

What do Official Veterinarians involved in TB testing need to do?

AHVLA Regional Veterinary Leads are working closely with Official Veterinarians to inform them of the new testing requirements to ensure they are aware of any increases or decreases in testing in their area as soon as possible.

What are the 'further measures' you mentioned that will be brought in during 2013 to tackle the spread of the disease front?

We are looking at ways to identify the geographic spread of TB across the country and bring in appropriate measures to tackle and halt the geographic spread of disease. A package of measures is being developed and will be communicated to farmers once finalised.

What are the implications of the surveillance testing changes for Cattle Tracing System (CTS) links?

As now, holdings in the annual testing area will not be able to apply for CTS links to holdings in the four-yearly testing area. Pre-existing CTS links between holdings in annual testing areas and holdings in four-yearly testing areas will be phased out or removed. CTS links between holdings on the same testing frequency (either annual or four-yearly) will not be affected. Further changes to CTS links in the annually tested area may be developed as a part of the strategy for halting the geographical spread of TB. We will provide you with further updates as the policy develops.

Please see [Bovine TB Information Note 03/12](#) for details of the changes to Cattle Tracing System (CTS) links introduced in July 2012.

Can I apply for a new Sole Occupancy Authority (SOA) or add new premises to my existing SOA?

No. The ban on approving new SOAs or adding new premises to existing SOAs, which was introduced in July 2012, remains in place.

Please see Bovine [TB Information Note 03/12](#) for details of the changes to Sole Occupancy Authorities (SOAs) introduced in July 2012.

Will the rules on Pre-movement testing change?

No. All herds in the new annual testing area (as well as higher risk herds in the four-yearly testing area) will need to carry out pre-movement tests for movements.

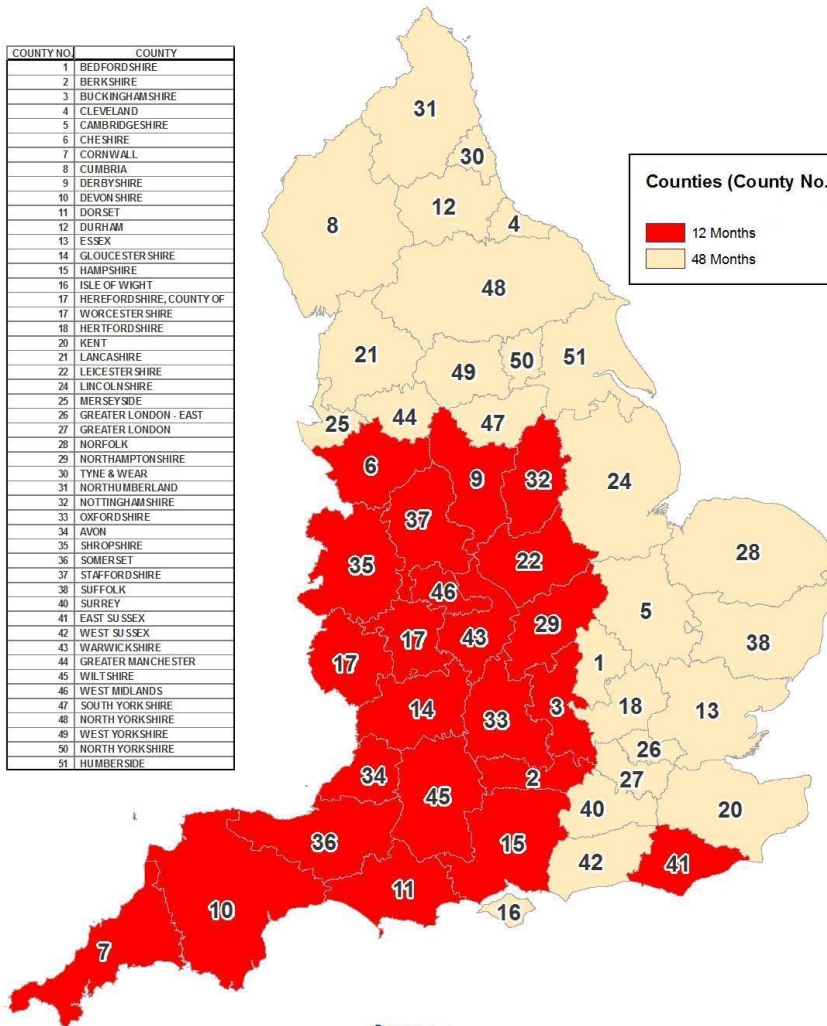
Contacts

If you have any further questions on how these changes will affect you, please contact your local AHVLA office (or the BCMS Helpline in the case of issues around CTS links). Contact details are available at:

<http://animalhealth.defra.gov.uk/about/contact-us/index.htm>

2013 TB testing Intervals

COUNTY NO.	COUNTY
1	BEDFORDSHIRE
2	BERKSHIRE
3	BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
4	CLEVELAND
5	CAMBRIDGESHIRE
6	CHESHIRE
7	CORNWALL
8	CUMBRIA
9	DERBYSHIRE
10	DEVONSHIRE
11	DORSET
12	DURHAM
13	ESSEX
14	GLOUCESTERSHIRE
15	HAMPSHIRE
16	ISLE OF WIGHT
17	HEREFORDSHIRE, COUNTY OF
17	WORCESTERSHIRE
18	HERTFORDSHIRE
20	KENT
21	LANCASHIRE
22	LEICESTERSHIRE
24	LINCOLNSHIRE
25	MERSEYSIDE
26	GREATER LONDON - EAST
27	GREATER LONDON
28	NORFOLK
29	NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
30	TYNE & WEAR
31	NORTHUMBERLAND
32	NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
33	OXFORDSHIRE
34	AVON
35	SHROPSHIRE
36	SOMERSET
37	STAFFORDSHIRE
38	SUFFOLK
40	SURREY
41	EAST SUSSEX
42	WEST SUSSEX
43	WARWICKSHIRE
44	GREATER MANCHESTER
45	WILTSHIRE
46	WEST MIDLANDS
47	SOUTH YORKSHIRE
48	NORTH YORKSHIRE
49	WEST YORKSHIRE
50	NORTH YORKSHIRE
51	HUMBERSIDE



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