



RISK BASED TESTING PROGRAMME - DEER

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR FARMERS | MARCH 2020

BACKGROUND

OSPRI is expanding its risk-based approach to TB surveillance for deer to three areas in 2020 – Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Southland. This will allow for no on-farm TB testing of deer in these areas. The TB-infection risk will be assessed using NAIT movement data and carcass inspection at slaughter. Expansion of the risk-based approach in these areas is scheduled to start during March 2020.

WHAT IS RISK-BASED TESTING?

Risk based testing (RBT) is a disease surveillance policy for directing on-farm TB testing based on certain risk factors. For herds with good record keeping and a low TB risk it may be possible to rely solely on inspection of animals at slaughter without on-farm testing.

WHAT ARE TB RISK FACTORS?

Risk factors that could lead to infection in your herd include:

- The area the animals have been grazed in or originated from
- The risk associated with the herd(s) they have been in (have they been exposed to animals diagnosed with TB?).
- The herd is in an area where wildlife still carries TB

HOW IS RBT DIFFERENT TO THE CURRENT TB TESTING FRAMEWORK?

The current TB testing programme requires all herds to have eligible animals tested on-farm. Testing frequency depends on the location but every herd with breeding stock is required to TB test at least once every three years.

Under a risk-based surveillance programme low-risk breeding herds located in TB surveillance areas (testing once every three years), would not be required to test animals on-farm. Testing may be required in future if a farmer buys in animals of a higher risk, the property's NAIT compliance is unsatisfactory, or if suspicious TB samples are found at slaughter.

WHY IS RBT BEING ROLLED OUT?

Using NAIT we can follow all animals to slaughter, which can provide good information to assess TB risk for a herd. In addition to this, the risk of TB infection is greatly reducing as we eliminate the disease from herds, dramatically reduce areas where wildlife is infected and improve livestock movement recording and monitoring. The overall goal is to stop herd testing in areas with very low risk and target testing in high-risk areas.

Risk-based disease testing is being extended to the next three areas as it will not jeopardise progress toward TB freedom, will result in reduced testing costs and reduce the hassle of having to muster animals for regular TB testing.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE NEW APPROACH?

The new approach targets specific herds in your area based on their risk of potential exposure to TB. On-farm TB testing will be removed where the risk is low.

TB testing programmes for neighbouring farms may be different, based on their herd history, location and stock movements. This approach will reduce TB tests nationally.

WILL DINZ'S TB LEVY PAID TO OSPRI BE REDUCING?

No. Whilst we anticipate overall testing volumes will reduce, there will still be targeted testing as and where required. There are also costs associated with slaughter surveillance and the assessment of granulomas sampled at meat plants and sent for laboratory testing. The levy also contributes to vector control operations nation-wide.

WHO IS INVOLVED?

RBT was introduced in a pilot programme in 2019 for selected deer herds in four low TB risk areas; Northland, Auckland, Taranaki and Gisborne. This year, that is expanding across three more areas – Waikato, Bay of Plenty and Southland, for deer herds. Wider roll-out, including cattle herds, will be considered from 2021 after an evaluation of the programme.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR FARMERS?

- For eligible deer herds within the targeted areas, on-farm herd testing will no longer occur. TB surveillance will still occur at slaughter in processing plants. We have recently refreshed the TB lesion identification skills of all meat inspectors to ensure competence and consistency of reporting.
- The herd status of all deer herds within the targeted areas will change to 'CM' (Clear-Monitored) meaning TB monitoring now occurs at slaughter.
- As well as clearly indicating how TB monitoring will be carried out in these herds, OSPRI is considering a shift of thinking towards CM becoming the top-tier status level under RBT, replacing C10.
- Should the risk status of individual herds within an RBT area change - for example, with the arrival of animals from higher risk areas or herds - on-farm testing may be reintroduced for specific herds. Farmers will be advised of this at the time. This will not change the overall RBT area designation.
- OSPRI will still be undertaking programmes to control wildlife in areas where TB is still prevalent in wildlife and conducting ongoing surveillance for TB in wildlife in areas that have not been declared free from TB. Your farm is not close to these areas however, so you will not notice any increase in TB control close to your farm unless our wildlife surveillance activities suggest it is necessary.

WHY DOES RBT CURRENTLY JUST INVOLVE DEER FARMERS?

- The last infected deer herd detected in the North Island was in 2011 and was the result of residual infection from a previous breakdown. Also, the majority of deer movements are directly to slaughter.
- All herds currently participating in the RBT programme are in areas with no evidence of TB in possums.
- These factors add up to deer herds from these regions representing a very low TB risk.

WILL I STILL HAVE TO TEST CATTLE ON MY PROPERTY?

Yes. Cattle have not yet been moved to a risk-based testing programme.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF NAIT?

- RBT is totally reliant on NAIT data to provide accurate TB risk assessments. To protect your farm, and neighbouring farms from TB, your NAIT accounts need to be completely up to date to ensure we undertake the appropriate surveillance activity for your farm's level of risk. If you're unsure about your NAIT requirements or need help with your account, please call the OSPRI Contact Centre on 0800 482 4636.
- It is important to understand that NAIT data will be analysed to monitor for inward movements of "risk" animals – TB testing requirements for that herd will be adjusted accordingly and farmers will be notified of any need to TB test.

QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR TB TESTING OR NAIT RESPONSIBILITIES?

Call the OSPRI's Contact Centre on 0800 482 4636 or visit www.ospri.co.nz for more information.