

TB PLAN 2016

RISK-BASED TESTING

FACTSHEET 2016-03

This factsheet provides an overview of the new approach to TB testing for livestock under a revised TB plan that comes into effect on 1 July 2016.

The disease testing approach has evolved to more closely and accurately target the risk of infection and management of disease at herd level. This significantly enhances risk-based testing (RBT), the capability of tracing animal movements (through NAIT), and deeper information and knowledge about TB disease control.

This new approach is a progression from the current TB testing programme where the risk of TB in livestock is taken into account in the design and application of disease control measures. The fundamentals of this approach are based on:

- **Application of approved diagnostic tests** for cattle and deer disease surveillance and for the identification and eradication of infection within herds.
- **Further surveillance** for disease in herds via post-mortem inspection at slaughter.
- **Controls on the movement of cattle or deer** from areas or herds with higher risk of infection (Movement Control Areas, MCA).

This approach has been applied using wide geographical disease control areas based on wildlife disease risk and combined herd infection levels.

NEW APPROACH

The new approach is centred on more detailed risk assessments of which herds require testing, how often and in what circumstances. This involves:

- a new methodology to guide decisions for maximum value-for-money,
- fewer TB tests undertaken nationally,
- targeted TB testing applied to herds where TB risk factors determine necessity,
- increased frequency of TB testing for herds that receive animals (post-mortem testing) originating from previously infected herds or high-risk areas,
- gradual removal of disease control area classifications, including movement control areas (MCAs),
- animals from infected herds only being allowed to move for slaughter, and
- a change to the format of herd TB risk status to reflect key risk factors.

It is expected that these measures, alongside significant ongoing vector control work to prevent TB infection from possums, will allow infected herd prevalence to fall to 0% by 2026.

In addition, improvements in data systems functionality will allow the recording of TB risk status. In time, this is likely to be used by farmers as a market signal (i.e. that animals with a medium to high risk rating, that requires additional TB testing, have a lower market value).

WHY TAKE AN ENHANCED RISK-BASED APPROACH?

The structure of the current testing programme is based on the risk to domestic herds from wildlife TB infection, i.e. more testing is done in areas where the risk is higher, especially in vector risk areas (VRAs). Testing requirements are relaxed (lesser frequency, higher age-groups) the further the herd is away from a VRA.

This TB testing regime, combined with vector control, has been very effective in controlling infection. However, a continuation of the current approach is unlikely to be the most cost-effective. For example, TB testing in surveillance areas consumes over 30% of the cattle TB testing resources, yet there is no TB vector risk in those areas.

The risk of TB 'moving in' through animal movements does, however, remain real. An updated risk based approach can address the risks more cost-effectively, through less testing in the surveillance area (reflecting the local risk) and more done at the destination herd where animals with a higher TB risk are moved to.

NEW TESTING REQUIREMENTS

The new approach brings significant changes to domestic herd TB surveillance. Specifically, a more targeted risk-based testing approach across the programme involves applying a risk rating classification to three categories:

1. **Area risk** – Local risk from wildlife (possums).
2. **Herd history risk** – History of TB infection within a herd.
3. **Movement risk** – Movement of animals associated with area and herd history risk (above) and/or volume of animal movements (on an annual percentage basis) based on data derived from NAIT.

A weighting multiplier would be applied to each category based on relative significance. For example, a previously infected herd is a factor of higher priority. The new approach also relies heavily on ongoing surveillance and notifications to OSPRI of TB infection found in carcasses during routine slaughter.

BENEFITS OF NEW APPROACH

It is expected that the new approach will reduce the number of cattle requiring TB testing from 4.2 million to less than 1.5 million, with a reduction in the number of deer requiring testing from approximately 250,000 to less than 100,000 by 2020.

IMPLEMENTING THE NEW APPROACH

The new RBT approach will be phased in over a period of two to three years from 1 July 2016. The first step will be introduced through a pilot programme involving a mix of herds (based on location, herd history, level of meat processor surveillance and trading behaviour).

A reassessment of the current movement control areas is proposed to be phased in by March 2017, and the disease control classifications removed and eventually replaced with full TB risk-based testing policy.

For more information about OSPRI's risk-based testing, visit www.ospri.co.nz. For more information on the TB Plan review visit www.tbplanreview.co.nz.